

Crohn's Disease Information Sheet

Crohn's disease is a chronic, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). It usually occurs in the lower part of the small intestine or the beginning of the large intestine, but can affect any part of the digestive tract. The inflammation extends deep into the lining of the affected organ and can cause pain and make the intestines empty frequently, resulting in diarrhea.

Symptoms and Signs

- Abdominal pain.
- Diarrhea.
- Rectal bleeding.
- Weight loss.
- Anemia.
- Skin irritations.
- Fatigue.
- Joint pain.

Treatment

Treatment depends on the location and severity of the disease, as well as complications and response to previous treatments. The goal of treatment is to control inflammation, correct nutritional deficiencies and relieve symptoms. Treatment may include drugs, nutritional supplements, surgery or a combination of these options. Some patients have long periods of remission, sometimes years, when they are free of symptoms.

Educational Implications

A student may have difficulty concentrating due to fatigue, pain or emotional distress. Extended time may be required to complete schoolwork, particularly during flare-ups.

Diarrhea is a common problem for students with Crohn's disease. The student may need to leave the room frequently and/or suddenly for toileting and remain there for an extended time.

Mild Crohn's disease usually causes slight to moderate intestinal discomfort, but the pain may be severe and include nausea and vomiting in cases that are more serious.

A modified schedule, such as late arrival or early departure may be needed to accommodate medical needs for health care procedures. On-going medical care may result in frequent absences from school.

A student may need activity modifications and/or a modified diet during a flare-up.

Educational Options

Those students whose Crohn's disease adversely affects their educational performance may benefit from special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). To qualify under IDEA, a student must meet eligibility criteria in one of thirteen specific disability categories. IDEA entitles a student with a disability to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and an individualized education program, including individual goals, objectives, related services, accommodations and modifications.

Students that do not qualify for services under IDEA may qualify under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. To qualify under Section 504, a student must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (for example learning, breathing, thinking, concentrating, walking, bodily functions). Under Section 504, a student is entitled to equal opportunity and a plan that provides regular or special education and related aids and services.

A student with a health condition who does not require special instruction and related services can receive, as appropriate, a wide range of supports in the general education classroom, including accommodations, individualized health plans (IHP), emergency care plans (ECP) and local education agency supports.