

Thriving with Crohn's disease

Crohn's disease (CD) is a lifelong condition but that doesn't mean it has to take over your life. With a little bit of planning and support, you can write your own journey and do the amazing things that you want to do.

Although it can sometimes feel as though no one else understands what it's like to have CD, especially in school, you would be surprised at how much your teachers and friends can help you. Below are some concerns you may have regarding school life and how to handle them.

How can I keep up with the classes I miss?

There will be times when you miss classes because you are feeling unwell or you need to attend your medical appointments. However, this doesn't necessarily have to mean that you will end up falling behind in class.

You can talk to your teacher and arrange for some extra homework for those days when you end up missing school, or get an extension on a deadline. If you are in hospital under observation or at home and feeling well enough to soak up some knowledge, you could even attend your class via a video conference. Just arrange for your teacher or a friend to take in a laptop and set up the call – your virtual presence will be in class!



Why do I feel so tired in classes?

You may simply not like that particular class very much but chances are that the symptoms of CD are draining your energy and leaving you tired and sleepy in classes. This can make it very difficult to pay attention and remember what you are learning. If you are feeling this way, consider taking a short period of rest in the sick bay at your school. This may help to restore your energy levels.

Can I play sports?



There is no reason why you can't take part in sports. However, you need to keep your body's limits in mind. If sports like soccer that require a lot of running aggravate your symptoms then try something with a little less running, such as volleyball or tennis.

Talk to your physical education teacher or your coach about your condition so that they are aware that you may sometimes need to leave suddenly to go to the toilet. There may also be times when your disease is acting up and you may need to take it easy. Listen to your body – take good care of it and you will be back to playing in no time.



Can I go to school camp?

There is no reason you can't go to school camp and participate in all the fun activities there. It just takes a little bit of forward planning. Talk to the camp supervisor before going so they are aware of your condition and what it entails. Get a map of the camp if you can and mark all the toilet facilities on it, in case of an emergency. Also, take some extra clothes with you because accidents can happen.

What if I need multiple toilet breaks during an exam?



Exams can be stressful enough without having to worry about toilet breaks. Talk to your teacher about this. They may be able to arrange for you to have extra toilet breaks and additional time to complete exams, so you are not at a disadvantage. You could also get a seat near the door so you can get in and out discreetly.



How do I ask my teachers for help with CD?

Your teachers are there to support you in meeting your full potential at school. They will be more than happy to assist you in any way possible. However, not all your teachers may know exactly what Crohn's disease entails. Communicating with them and letting them know what you need can make your school life much easier.

If you are not sure where to start, you can download and print the **'I have Crohn's disease'** card and give it to your teachers. This tells them some of the basic things they need to know about CD and how it impacts your day-to-day life.

How do I tell my friends I have CD?



Talking to your friends about CD can seem intimidating. Some people find that sharing their problems can help them, while others prefer to keep things private. It's completely up to you who you want to tell about your condition. If you do decide to tell your friends, it can be difficult to know where to start. You don't have to tell them everything about CD but it's good to cover the basics.

Start with what CD is, the symptoms you are experiencing and how they affect your day-to-day life. Tell them what support you need from them to help you manage your condition. For instance, one of your friends could bring you the homework when you miss school or they could be flexible about the types of activities you do together as there may be times when you need to stay in rather than go out.