School Nurse Guide to IBD

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Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) is a chronic autoimmune condition that causes inflammation in the digestive tract. IBD most commonly includes Crohn's Disease, Ulcerative Colitis (UC), and Indeterminate Colitis. IBD is a noncontagious condition that often causes unpredictable flare-ups with symptoms such as abdominal pain, frequent diarrhea, malnourishment, and fatigue. IBD can be triggered by genetic, immune, and environmental factors and can significantly impact a student's daily life at school. Because IBD can impact a student's energy, focus, and emotional well-being, having an informed and understanding support system at school is key to helping them stay happy and healthy.

Common Symptoms and Treatments

Flare-up symptoms can include: Abdominal pain, cramping, fatigue, frequent diarrhea, lack of appetite, weight loss, and anemia.

IBD Treatments are case-specific and may include:

- Medications such as anti-inflammatory drugs, immunosuppressants, biologics, and steroids.
- Nutritional support such as dietary changes, supplements, or feeding tubes.
- Surgery, sometimes necessary for more severe cases.
- Mental health care to support anxiety, depression, and stress related to a chronic illness diagnosis.

bit.ly/3HPTRoF

Managing Flares & IBD Symptoms

Recommendations - What to Include in an IHP

The Foundation recommends that school nurses develop an Individualized Health Plan (IHP) with families to work in conjunction with a 504 plan, guiding students' medical care at school. Each IHP is tailored to the specific protocols, staffing, and resources of the school. It includes detailed instructions for daily health management, staff training, and emergency response procedures. Some students in remission may not need an IHP, but those whose medical needs affect their academic or social functioning can benefit from one.

- **Dietary Needs:** Some students have food restrictions or may need snacks and water during class to manage symptoms or to take medications. A liquid diet may also be needed during flare-ups.
- **Ostomy Care:** Students with an ostomy will need access to a clean or private bathroom, and may benefit from keeping an extra supply bag in the school nurse's office. Emptying and changing an ostomy pouch may be necessary during the school day.
- **Post-Transfusion Care:** Students who receive transfusions may need to be monitored for potential delayed reactions (ex. fatigue, fever, rash). Report concerns to parents. Ensure the student has access to any prescribed medications post-transfusion (ex. iron supplements).
- **Emotional Well-Being:** Chronic illness can significantly affect mental health. Students with IBD may face stress, anxiety, or isolation; regular check-ins can help ensure emotional and physical support.
- **Advocate for Bathroom Access**: Ensure immediate, unrestricted access, with discreet options.

Collaboration Between Schools and Families

Supporting a student with IBD takes teamwork. Open communication between families and school staff ensures medical, academic, and emotional needs are met through shared information and flexible accommodations.

Ways to Work Together:

- Schedule regular check-ins between families, teachers, and school nurses.
- Collaborate to create and continually update 504 Plans as necessary.
- Respect the student's privacy while keeping necessary staff informed.

bit.ly/40lUVXG

504 Plan Fact Sheet
+ resources for teachers, parents, and students

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Day-to-Day Impact on Students

1. Unpredictable flare-ups can lead to frequent and urgent trips to the bathroom.
    - To be prepared for bathroom emergencies, parents can set up an emergency supply bag.
2. Discomfort can lead to difficulty concentrating and "brain fog".
    - See the listed resources for setting up an accommodation plan for your student. Accommodations can include breaks during class to manage symptoms & extended deadlines during flare-ups.
    - Ensure teachers understand how IBD can affect focus.
3. Sudden flare-ups can cause social anxiety and embarrassment.
    - Some students may not feel comfortable openly sharing their diagnosis with friends and classmates, so it is important to maintain discretion as necessary.
    - Understand that IBD impacts more than just physical health, but also mental health.
4. Dietary restrictions can lead to difficulties with school meal plans.
    - Talk to the school about food accommodations to help account for dietary restrictions.
    - Try looking into gut-friendly recipes.
5. Missing classes due to doctors' appointments or flare-ups may impact academic performance.
    - Teachers should have an understanding of the need for absence and ensure that they will work with the student upon return to catch them up.

Emergency Supply Bag

- Toilet paper
- Wet wipes
- Hand sanitizer
- Disposable gloves
- Large-sized freezer bags to store soiled clothes
- Clean underwear & clean clothes

https://bit.ly/44lLh9X

Newly Diagnosed Patient Resources

For Students

Scan to learn more about supporting students with IBD

School & IBD: Connect students to IBD resources on school life - from talking to teachers to managing symptoms and staying active.

https://bit.ly/447Xg9O

Teen Resources: New to IBD? Explore Just Like Me resources—real teen stories on diagnosis, daily life, and finding your own way with Crohn's or colitis.

https://bit.ly/3HL8Osa

Camp Oasis: Discover a one-week residention camp for kids and teens with IBD.

https://bit.ly/3HMc4ne

Recursos en Español

Aquí puede encontrar un folleto con recursos e información sobre la Enfermedad Inflamatoria Intestinal Pediátrica

http://bit.ly/4kLfDsa