

help with exams

There are various ways in which exams might affect a young person with IBD. Exams can add to the pressure on young people with such an unpredictable illness and the resulting stress can increase their need for visits to the toilet. Early morning is usually the worst time for sickness and diarrhoea and the worry of being in a fixed place for any length of time may lead to further problems. It may be necessary, especially during exams set by an outside board, to have an invigilator to stay with a young person during their exam and escort them to the toilet as many times as is necessary and allow them extra time to complete their exam.

Should it be necessary to ask for Special Consideration from an exam board, it can be helpful if a consultant or GP are able to submit a letter on behalf of a young person with IBD. Please refer to guidance from the Joint Council for Qualifications, the body that provides a single voice on examination administration for the seven largest qualification providers:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance>

The following text is just one example of a letter prepared by a consultant in support of a patient addressed in this instance to the Examinations Officer of a school, asking them to submit a request for Special Consideration to an external exam board. This provides a useful template that can be used as a basis for parents, GP or consultants to write to the school's Examinations Officer.

Please note: it is important that a letter specifically addresses the issues affecting a young person as a result of their IBD. Please also refer to guidance on how schools should help children with IBD with their education and studies such as CICRA's factsheet on "supporting children with medical needs in schools."

Dear Examinations Officer

Regarding: [name of young person]

Date of Birth:

[name of young person] has been diagnosed with [name of condition, eg Crohn's disease or Ulcerative colitis], one of the main types of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). IBD is a remitting, relapsing disease and unpredictable in nature. [name of child] has had several relapses over the past [year/month], which have caused tiredness, lethargy and difficulties concentrating [list any relevant symptoms or effects]. Although [name of child] maintained good school attendance/ good work when able to, around the time of their examinations, the standard of their work suffered considerably due to an increase in symptoms and considerable stress throughout this period. This is very common with this diagnosis. They found it a strain to keep up with the class and revision work and were concerned they were not able to match their previous 'best' standard.

Although stress does not cause IBD, it can cause the condition to be more active. Throughout the examination period, it was quite clear {name of child} was subject to disadvantage by:

- being too tired to revise as much or as effectively as they could
- feeling considerably stressed and unwell on the day of all their examinations
- being extremely anxious and distressed with feelings generated around being late for morning examinations (morning exams are a particularly anxiety for students with IBD, as this is a time when their bowels are most active)
- thoughts throughout the exam regarding the need to use the toilet

I would be grateful if you would continue to support them moving forward and submit a post examinations Special Consideration request on the grounds of the above. If staff also feel the standard of [name of child]'s coursework was affected by their illness then we recommend an application for Special Consideration be made for coursework as well.