



Supporting candidates and employees with bowel conditions such as Crohn's disease, irritable bowel syndrome or coeliac disease

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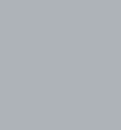
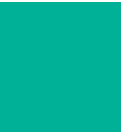


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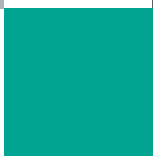
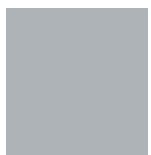
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Making adjustments – top tips





Introduction



This guide aims to give a general introduction to how bowel conditions might impact someone at work and provide good practice tips on how to support them.

Diagnosis, treatment and cultural perceptions of bowel conditions may vary between countries. Similarly, legal requirements will also differ: in some countries, bowel conditions may not be legally recognised as a disability whereas in other countries, people with these conditions may be protected by local legislation.

Ensuring that you support your candidates and employees with bowel conditions will help you create a more diverse workforce, it's often the case that when a line manager is confident managing a person with a disability or long-term condition, they become more effective managers for all employees.

Diagnosis, treatment and cultural perceptions of bowel conditions vary between countries.



Language

Talking about bowel conditions

Language can be important in creating an open and inclusive workplace for people experiencing Crohn's disease, irritable bowel syndrome or coeliac disease.

In this guide we use the term 'bowel conditions' as it is widely understood and covers a range of conditions related to the bowel and digestive system. If in doubt, use the language that the person with bowel conditions uses to describe themselves and to avoid placing 'labels' on employees.

Talking about disability

In this guide, we use the term 'disabilities' as used by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) [1] ratified by over 175 countries. The UN CRPD Article 1 provides a definition for 'persons with disabilities':

"Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

In practice, this could include people with a wide range of impairments or conditions such as dyslexia, cancer, diabetes or bowel conditions, to name just a few.

[1] United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: [un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html)

Talking about adjustments

Adjustments (in some countries referred to as 'accommodations') remove or reduce the effect of the barriers experienced by candidates and employees with disabilities.

Examples of adjustments might include providing a ramp as an alternative to stairs or an electronic version of paper document so that an employee with a visual impairment can use screen reader software to access the information. Working hours and locations can be made flexible and managers can agree different ways to communicate with their employees e.g. over the phone, via email, face-to-face or in writing.

These are small changes that can remove barriers that stop someone from doing their job and can support good performance. In this guide, we refer to these types of changes as 'adjustments'.

Working hours and locations can be made flexible.



What are bowel conditions?

Bowel conditions affect parts of the digestive system and how the body absorbs and digests food and gets rid of waste. Different conditions impact different areas of the small and large intestine (which forms the bowel); they have different symptoms and impact individuals differently.

Living with bowel conditions

Unpredictable flare-ups, regular check-ups and the embarrassment and taboo that surrounds some of these conditions mean that living with bowel conditions can be difficult at times. Many people find it difficult to talk about their conditions and symptoms to others, although an increased awareness of these conditions make these conversations easier to have.

About Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis

Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are chronic conditions where parts of the digestive system become inflamed. Crohn's disease can affect any part of the digestive system from the mouth to the anus. Ulcerative colitis only affects the colon (large intestine) and rectum.

Each person's experience of Crohn's disease will be different; the disease is on-going and symptoms are likely to include pain, diarrhoea, severe tiredness or weight loss.

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is an umbrella term encompassing both Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis and other conditions such as microscopic colitis [2].

[2] For more information on microscopic colitis: crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/about-inflammatory-bowel-disease/microscopic-colitis

Internal and external sources of help

There are many sources of help and advice that you can access for detailed information about bowel conditions in your country. Internally, you should speak to your own manager or to your local Human Resources (HR) team. Your organisation may also have diversity and inclusion officers or a disability liaison officer you can ask for help and advice on how to support employees with bowel conditions at work.

Externally, there may be local organisations that can provide you with expert advice and information about anxiety and depression in your country. The International Labour Organisation's Global Business and Disability Network's website [3] contains some useful information about local requirements and the availability of disability support in countries all over the world.

What is irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)?

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a common condition also affecting the digestive system; it is more common in women than men [4] and can potentially have a big impact on people's lives.

IBS causes severe abdominal cramps, constipation and diarrhoea and severe bloating. Lack of energy, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, nausea, flatulence, backache, sudden urges to urinate and not being able to control when you defecate are other symptoms that people with IBS may experience.

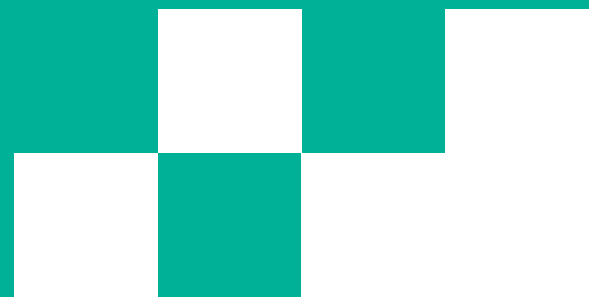
The root cause of this lifelong condition is still unknown. IBS is a fluctuating condition where symptoms will vary from one day to another with unexpected flare-ups. Although not everybody is able to identify their triggers, some find that food and drinks as well as stress can trigger flare-ups.

[3] ILO GBDN website: businessanddisability.org/country-profiles/

[4] theibsnetwork.org/have-i-got-ibs/what-is-ibs/

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11 to 22 are available in the
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Contact us

**Business Disability Forum
Nutmeg House
60 Gainsford Street
London
SE1 2NY**

Tel: +44-(0)20-7403-3020

Fax: +44-(0)20-7403-0404

Email: enquiries@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk

Web: businessdisabilityforum.org.uk

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