



The home of IBD information & support

IBD in the Workplace

Your workplace is “Quite IBD Friendly” – this means that there are lots of really good things in place to accommodate someone with IBD – however there are some improvements that could be made. Take a read and share the PDF with your employer so he/she can take steps to help you with your IBD better in the workplace.

Dear Employer,

Employing someone with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) does not need to be daunting. Most people with IBD lead highly productive and normal lives.

However, certain adjustments in the workplace can help your employee feel more comfortable and work more effectively.

Your employee recently completed the Guts4Life IBD Work Planner tool. This tool takes into account their condition and gives recommendations on how working life can be adjusted to benefit both the employee and the company as a whole.

Facts about IBD

What is IBD?

IBD is a chronic (on-going) condition that affects the bowels. People with IBD may experience flare-ups, where the condition worsens for a period of time, and then periods where their health goes back to normal. For most people – the flare-ups are shorter than the periods of normal health.

Symptoms of IBD include:

- Diarrhoea
- Abdominal pain
- Blood in the stools
- Painful bowel movements

Please note that IBD is **not** contagious.

Employing someone with IBD

For most people with IBD, managing the condition with lifestyle and medicines means they can lead a normal and productive life.

Simple and effective changes in the workplace can really help your employee cope better with their IBD, and work better and more efficiently.

Below are some suggestions based on your employee's responses on the work planner tool.

Have a read of the below and discuss the next steps with your employee.

Travelling

If you find travelling to and from work very difficult, ask your employer about working from home.

Working from home as and when you need to will help you to manage your condition better.

If you find travelling to work on public transport very difficult, but are able to drive, consider driving - maybe discussing with your employer the possibility of a car allowance, and ensure a parking spot close to the entrance.

Travelling by car may help to make your journey to work less tiring and stressful.

Eating & Drinking

Ensure your colleagues are aware that you need to eat regularly at your workstation.

Access to a free water supply is an important aspect of maintaining health. Drinking sufficient fluids is an integral part of any treatment plan for people with IBD. Regular hydration can also boost productivity and concentration in the workplace.

Type of Work

Altering the work schedule can help: regular breaks, time to sit down or creating more variety in the job can help to reduce the physical demands. If the job is very physical - it might be worth considering other work options.

Hours

Ask your employer about flexible working hours - this could be set up to allow you to work less hours when you are feeling less well and make up the time later.

Sometimes a later start can help. Some employers allow their staff to build up time in lieu so they can take it off when they need it.

Also, consider asking your employer about the possibility of working from home, cutting out travelling time and helping you to get more rest when you need it.

If none of these options are viable, it might be that finding a different type of work more suited to your condition would be more appropriate.

Toilet Access

Find out if it is possible to create or move your workstation closer to the toilet facilities (which have adequate privacy). This will help you get to the toilet as and when you need to.

Workplace toilets often lack privacy and sufficient ventilation. In such cases, access to separate and individual facilities such as a disabled toilet, can help to alleviate embarrassment.

Toilet Breaks

Ensure your colleagues are aware of your need for regular toilet breaks, ask one or more colleagues or co-workers to cover you during this time.

This will help you to be supported in your work environment.

Occupational Health

Before you decide on how to implement changes in the workplace, if available discuss with your Human Resources or Occupational Health department, who can also advise you on how best to proceed.

