

IBD in the Workplace: A Patient's Experience

Patient Profile



Steve Holbrook, 45

- Diagnosed with Crohn's Disease at age 6
- Senior Executive Vice Chairman of a financial marketing firm

Does Crohn's/colitis affect a person's ability to do their job?

"It can definitely affect your ability to work; impact depends on whether you're in a flare or remission."



How do I deal with IBD at work?

"When I'm feeling good, I double down on my work."



"This creates flexibility for rest, appointments, and tougher days."

What are the needs of a person with Crohn's and colitis likely to be?

Flexibility of time - to be able to handle appointments, flare ups, extra rest, therapy and work

Proximity to a washroom - e.g. when we go to the mall, I would map out all the washrooms so that I could ensure I was ready.

Be transparent with your team - when you're having a flare up, this will help you feel supported and reduce the guilt of needing to take care of yourself."

Proposed solutions to help employees navigate the work environment:

"Having an office or cubicle closest to the washroom"

This is important not just for proximity, but for the ability to be discrete with how often you may be going to the washroom



Flexibility in work hours

Opportunity for the option to work from home as an option



Having access to health benefits

to ensure that your employee has access to mental health support



Work lunches or dinner functions with dietary restriction options

This helps support individual's unique restrictions"



How can one proactively prepare to help prevent possible issues at work?

"Be transparent with your team especially when you're not feeling good. The right work environment will support you and not watch you struggle."



"The more open & transparent your communication with your managers the better. Don't try to hide it!"



How can an employer help to support your employee?

"IBD patients are often proud and may hide their symptoms."

- "Check in regularly; be proactive - don't wait for them to come to you
- Create a workplace where employees feel safe and supported
- A supportive environment makes it easier to speak up during flare-ups"

