

- You can find out about local support groups for Crohn's disease and Colitis from:
The National Association for Colitis and Crohn's Disease (NACC)
- The Health Information Service is a free telephone service on 0800 665544 which can give you up-to-date information over the phone or by fax or mail. It is a confidential and efficient service that is a very useful first port of call.

Useful addresses and telephone numbers

The National Association for Colitis and Crohn's Disease
PO Box 205
St. Albans
Hertfordshire AL1 1AB
Answerphone and Fax: 01727 844296

Health Information Service
Tel: 0800 665544
10 am-5 pm weekdays
Calls free and confidential

Education



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Further and higher education

Go for it!

At 16 you need to make important decisions about your future career and what Further Education courses or training you will be taking. In an increasingly skilled workforce, it is essential that you gain what qualifications, academic or vocational, you can.

The nature of Crohn's Disease or Colitis, however, does mean that you may be uncertain whether you will be able to undertake a prolonged period of study.

The good news is that recent changes, particularly in Higher Education, have made it more possible than ever to gain qualifications, so if illness interrupts your studies you need not give up your course.

Many Further and Higher Education courses are now modular in design and are becoming increasingly flexible. It is possible to take a break between modules and to complete them over a long period of time. The Credit Accumulation Transfer Scheme (CATS) also enables students to move between courses and institutions. Information about modular courses and CATS can be found in prospectuses or on ECCETIS, the database computer program, which is available in school careers libraries or in your local Careers Office.

In other words, if you are determined to continue with your education there is no reason why, with careful planning, you should not succeed.

Planning the way ahead

You may not see your illness as counting as a disability or yourself as someone with special needs. Nevertheless, you may well require a certain amount of support and special consideration from colleges or universities.

The Charters of Further and Higher Education state that you have the right to clear and accurate information about college policies and facilities for students with disabilities. However, there is no legislation setting out what facilities must be provided and there is considerable variation between institutions.

Before embarking on a course of study, therefore, it is important:

- To find out as much as possible about the course and the institution
- To discuss what needs you may have with your doctor and with the institution.

Most Further Education courses are followed from home, but for many young people Higher Education offers the first opportunity for real independence – taking responsibility for your studies and living away from home. However, you need to think carefully about the implications of moving away from your home and your existing medical support to an unknown environment and it is essential to take medical advice.

Although it may feel less independent, living at home has many advantages and does not mean that you need miss out on any student activities or social life. It might be possible to gain a place in a Hall of Residence in a local university or college which would enable you to live independently but in your home locality. In the rest of Europe, of course, it is the norm rather than the exception to study for your first degree from home.

Another alternative is to apply to the Open University to study for a degree at home.

As well as deciding which course you would like to study you will need to find out such things as:

- Where lectures/tutorials/practicals take place. How much travelling about would be involved? Can a room nearby be made available if you need to rest? What is the proximity of the toilets?
- Whether there is parking close-by.
- Where Halls of Residence are located. Are they on campus or some distance away? Can any dietary requirements be accommodated?
- Whether a work placement is involved. How demanding would this be?
- How much physical activity is involved in the course?
- How much flexibility is possible over meeting course-work deadlines?
- Whether any field trips will be necessary. What would they involve?

Making the application

Whether you decide to study from home or to move away you should indicate on your UCAS form that you have a medical condition which needs special consideration. If illness has interfered with exam results it is worthwhile getting your headteacher or tutor to write to individual institutions supporting your application.

It is important to discuss with the admissions tutor and the course tutor the nature of your illness, how it might affect your studies and what support you might require. Making personal contact in this way can do a great deal to overcome ignorance and possible discrimination.

A very useful group to support you in this is SKILL – National Bureau for Students with Disabilities. This is a nationwide organisation which offers advice, information, leaflets, newsletters and has also published in association with CRAC a book entitled *Higher Education and Disability* (Hobsons 1993. ISBN 1-85324-801-0) which is worth reading before making your application.

When at college

There are a number of sources of help once you are at university or college.

- You should make yourself known to the Student Health Centre so that if you need them in an emergency they have already been alerted to your needs.
- Most Higher Education institutions have student counselling help lines and many have a named person as a Special Needs or Disability Co-ordinator.
- You will also be assigned a personal tutor when you start your course who should be on hand to offer support and advice, personal as well as academic, when necessary.
- The Careers Service can also give guidance on making decisions about further studies, training or employment