

Communicating about IBD

This information sheet is for people living with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) who want to learn how to communicate with others about their condition.

Key points

- Having proactive discussions with your family, friends, or manager about your IBD can help support you.
- Knowing when to tell someone you're dating about your IBD will depend on how your relationship is progressing and when you feel comfortable sharing more information.
- Talking to your manager about your IBD can help you find practical solutions for when you're unwell in the workplace.

Talking with others about IBD

When you're unwell, your studies, work, and plans to go out with friends can take a back seat. It can be helpful to have proactive discussions about your IBD so people can support you when you have a 'flare up'. This may be an easy conversation if you know them well, but it can be harder if you don't know them very well. You can be selective about who you tell about condition and when.

How to talk to friends and family

It's important to be open with the people that love and care about you so that you have a good support network. Here are some tips to talk openly about IBD:

- **Choose the right time and place** – consider a private room where you can speak freely and have the other person's undivided attention.
- **Give them the facts** – talk about your IBD and how it impacts your life. You may need to state the obvious, like what happens when you're experiencing a 'flare up'. You may also need to be direct and simply state what support you need.
- **Be open to questions and try not to be put off by unexpected reactions** – people are naturally curious and will have questions. Some people can have negative reactions to serious news despite their best intentions.
- **Pace yourself and give the other person time to process** – you might decide to have several small conversations rather than covering all the information in one go. It might also take time for the other person to fully absorb what you're telling them, so check in with them again at a later date.

Dating and IBD

It's one thing to talk to your friends and family about IBD but talking about it on a first date is something else! You don't need to disclose your IBD on a first date but you might want to plan your date so you know where the toilets are or what food is on the menu. Knowing when to tell someone you're about your IBD will depend on how your relationship is progressing and when you feel comfortable sharing more information.

When you're ready you might start by talking about the symptoms of IBD as they relate to you and that at times you might not be up for going out. You don't have to go into too much detail in the beginning. As you get to know each other you might feel more comfortable offering more detail, like when you're attending your next appointment, or asking them for support when you need it.

Work and IBD

If talking to your employer about your IBD is on your to do list, it can be hard to know where to start. Here are some tips to help guide discussions with your employer:

- **Request a meeting.** Lock in some time to speak to your manager privately. In the meeting request you could provide some context about why you've asked to meet. For example, 'I would like to discuss possible workplace adjustments that would help me perform my work more effectively'.
- **Keep it high level.** Have the facts handy to share with your manager. You can send them a link to the Crohn's & Colitis Australia (CCA) guide for employers after your meeting.
- **Have some ideas ready.** If you're meeting to discuss workplace adjustments, it's a good idea to have some ideas written down. These may include easy access to adequate toilet facilities, cover for urgent toilet breaks, flexible working arrangements, or allowances for travel and social support.

For more information on how to talk to colleagues, how to address the common myths and misconceptions of IBD, and tips for talking about IBD at school, you can access the CCA website through the QR code below.

For help or information

Scan QR code for website:



Use the website search function to find related pages:

- [Working with IBD – employees](#)
- [Working with IBD - employers](#)
- [Supporting someone with IBD](#)

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