

## Other Health Concerns

### ***Definition***

The range of disabilities in this category includes chronic health impairments, such as chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), fibromyalgia, arthritis, muscular dystrophy (MD), multiple sclerosis (MS), cerebral palsy (CP), cancers, AIDS, hemophilia, epilepsy, and hepatitis, among others.

CFS is an immune dysfunction. The symptoms are similar to fibromyalgia. CFS involves more fatigue, while fibromyalgia involves more pain. Arthritis is also similar, but pain and fatigue are the primary symptoms.

MD is a genetic disease that primarily causes muscle weakness and spasms, but can cause other problems as well, including speech. Onset can be from childhood into adulthood, depending on the type. There is no cure.

MS is a degenerative disease that is of unknown cause, and has no cure. It may affect many areas, including mobility and speech.

CP is a non-degenerative congenital disorder that may affect mobility, coordination and cognitive abilities.

### ***Documentation***

Documentation needs to be completed by a Certified Physician who has expertise and experience in the diagnosis of the condition for which academic accommodations are being requested. Documentation needs to be current, within the last five years and must include the following:

- 1) An identification of the disabling condition(s).
- 2) The barriers for which accommodations are being requested.
- 3) Degree and range of functioning for chronic or progressive condition.
- 4) Prescribed medications, dosages and schedules, which may influence the types of accommodations provided, including any possible side effects.
- 5) Recommendations as to how the disabling condition(s) may be accommodated.

With this documentation students may be eligible to access appropriate support services and possible adaptive technology to reduce barriers to learning.

## *Symptoms*

The range of symptoms will depend on the health concern, but many are associated with fatigue and may often lead to depression. Other symptoms an individual may experience are:

- Joint and muscle pain.
- Difficulty with concentration, attention and memory.
- Reading may be difficult; slower than previous.
- Symptoms fluctuate for no apparent reason from day to day or week to week.
- Weakened immune system leads to frequent or long lasting secondary illnesses.
- Erratic sleep patterns.
- Very susceptible to stress.
- With CFS exercise worsens fatigue to an extreme degree.
- Cold generally worsens symptoms (especially for fibromyalgia and arthritis).

Allergies can be triggered by many things in the environment, be very difficult to treat and range from mild to severe. Symptoms may include severe sneezing, watering & itchy eyes, headaches, fatigue, difficulty breathing, and rashes or other skin irritations.

## *Student Strategies and Accommodations*

- Meet with Accessibility Coordinator several months before starting your course. They can help you plan, provide support and possibly assist in accessing adaptive technology. It is your responsibility to provide appropriate documentation. If you will require special assistance such as recorded materials, mobility assistance, special equipment, or special classroom seating options, it is especially important to contact Accessibility Services **at least 4 months prior** to the start of the semester.
- Take your medication as prescribed by your physician. If you are questioning side effects or effectiveness have a physician reassess your needs. It is illegal to share prescription medication. Stimulants do not mix with drugs or alcohol. (Mixing cocaine and stimulants can kill!)
- Take a reduced course load.
- Appropriate accommodations may include record lectures, the use of a note taker, extended time for course work, extra time and a quiet room to write exams.
- Request a class outline as soon as possible to assess any problem areas.
- Request a campus tour.
- Plan ahead for emergencies, such as building evacuation.
- If an assignment, presentation or exam is to be given in a format that is difficult (i.e. written), ask for an alternative format (i.e. oral) well ahead of time.

\*These are suggestions only -- you are the best judge of what will work for you.

### *Instructor Strategies and Accommodations*

- Appropriate accommodations may be to tape/record lectures.
- Pop quizzes are not recommended, especially if writing assistance is needed.
- Provide lecture notes if needed.
- If the student has limited mobility or another disability, refer to the specific disability for further strategies and accommodations and/or consult with the Accessibility Coordinator.
- Appropriate accommodations may include
  - Time extensions for assignments, especially if writing skills are limited or assistance is needed.
  - Assignments in alternative formats. For example, if assignment is oral, and speech is a problem, accommodations may include a reader, or written or visual presentation.
  - Use of a reader or scribe as needed for assignments and exams.
  - Extra time and a quiet room to write exams.

### **Links**

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

<http://www.mssociety.ca/bc/>

Muscular Dystrophy Canada

<http://www.muscle.ca/content/index.php?id=31>