
Coping with IBD

Children with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) face the challenge of an unpredictable and potentially embarrassing disease. They may be embarrassed about their symptoms or frequent visits to the bathroom, and they may fear being the target of the “bathroom humor” that is popular among children. In addition to the embarrassing symptoms, short stature, delayed puberty, and simply having a chronic illness may contribute to feeling “different” from peers. Participation in school and social activities may be adversely affected. IBD clearly has the potential to impact psychosocial functioning

Children with IBD appear to be at risk for more difficulties in psychosocial functioning than healthy children, although the problem reaches clinical significance in only a subset. The difficulty experienced by children with IBD is generally similar to that experienced in other chronic health conditions. In the area of behavioral/emotional functioning, mood and anxiety disorders are most common. Children with IBD are at increased risk for problems in social functioning, but the nature of their social difficulties is unclear. Mixed results have been found in the areas of family dysfunction and body image, and limited research exists in the areas of stress and coping, self-esteem, and eating problems.