An overview for teachers

Chronic granulomatous disease (CGD) is a rare disease found in 1 out of every 200,000 people born in the United States. Since CGD is a chronic condition, a person will have CGD for all of his or her life.

People with CGD have an immune system that isn’t working right and makes them susceptible to frequent and sometimes life-threatening bacterial and fungal infections. A healthy immune system can fight off infections from bacteria and fungi, also called pathogens. An immune system with CGD can typically stop viral infections like a cold or the flu but can’t stop serious infections caused by certain bacteria and fungi. It is important to remember that CGD is NOT an allergy.

Where pathogens can be found
Pathogens include harmful bacteria and fungi that can cause serious, life-threatening infections in people with CGD. Bacteria and fungi can be found in places all around us and at school, including in or on:

- Woodchips on playgrounds
- Soil and mulch in gardens and house plants
- Clippings from freshly mown grass
- Hay bales
- Standing water in lakes and ponds
- Dust from new construction and air vents
- Dander and dirt in carpets and on pets
- Mold in sheds, basements, caves, and barns

People with CGD can still have fun outdoors, but they should avoid activities and environments that can present hazards. Make sure to discuss any upcoming field trips, activities, or classroom projects with the student’s family to ensure they are safe for him or her to participate in.

Additionally, be aware that certain times of the year can cause bacteria and fungi to be more plentiful.

- **During spring,** rain showers can create puddles filled with bacteria.
- **During summer,** dry weather can lead to more dirt and spores in the air.
- **During fall,** it’s best to avoid hayrides or being around anyone raking leaves.

To learn more about the seasonal changes that may impact a child with CGD, visit CGDConnections.com.
Knowing and spotting the signs and symptoms

To anyone else, a low-grade fever or a scrape from a fall isn’t a big deal. For a person with CGD, it can be serious or life threatening and may lead to lengthy hospitalizations. As a teacher or administrator, you should know the signs and symptoms in case medical help is needed, including when your student exhibits the following or says something’s not right:

- Stomach pain
- Pain when eating or peeing
- Vomiting after eating
- Constant diarrhea
- Fever, cough, constant tiredness, or bone and/or joint pain
- Skin infections that cause boils, blisters, and sores
- Symptoms of pneumonia
- Swollen lymph nodes

Listen to the student when he or she says something’s not right.

- Many people with CGD can tell when something isn’t quite right. In some cases, it’s an unusual pain, or their body just feels “off”
- A buildup of granulomas or inflammation in the intestines can necessitate frequent trips to the bathroom
- Always let a child with CGD go to the nurse to get cuts or scrapes cleaned and bandaged
- If the student says they’re feeling sick, it’s important to alert his or her parents

Learn more at CGDConnections.com

A great way to stay up to date with tips and suggestions that can benefit you and your student with CGD is to visit CGDConnections.com. CGD Connections features practical tips and helpful advice about living life to fullest with CGD. We are on Facebook too at Facebook.com/CGDConnections.
Preparing your classroom for a child with CGD

Be prepared for long absences

Your student may have an IEP or a 504 plan in place. If so, reference that for day-to-day classroom needs, as they will be part of the plan. If a student with CGD does get an infection, it can result in a lengthy hospital stay, from 2 weeks to several months. Keeping a student current on his or her schoolwork during long absences benefits everyone. Here are some guidelines for managing their extended absences:

- Confirm that it is written in the student’s IEP or 504 plan that he or she has a chronic illness that may cause extended absences
- Identify school policies and procedures that need to be addressed. Determine who will be the liaison between the family and the school. In some cases, it is the special education office; in others, it may be the nurse
- Determine whether a doctor’s note is necessary for a student to obtain schoolwork
- An extended hospital stay may call for a reduced workload and shifting due dates for papers and tests
- Take advantage of technology. Skype a lesson to the student so he or she can stay connected with classmates!

It may seem like keeping up with assignments would give the student one more thing to worry about during a hospital stay. That isn’t necessarily so. Schoolwork can take a student’s mind off everything else, and learning is a great way to feel good about yourself during tough times.

What to tell a substitute

It’s important to inform a substitute about ways to accommodate your student with CGD. As you prepare your lesson plan, leave a note with the following information:

- A brief overview of CGD (you may even print and include the “CGD and school: an overview for teachers” page with your lesson plan)
- The names and contact information of teachers or senior administrators familiar with CGD
- The phone number of the school nurse and parents
- A list of special permissions, including permission to:
  - Go to the nurse’s office when needed
  - Access bathrooms throughout the school day
  - Participate in alternative activities (such as study hall instead of outdoor recess) or use accommodations
Making school and the classroom a safer place

Parents, teachers, and school staff should work together so everyone can feel confident about the health and safety of a child living with chronic granulomatous disease (CGD).

Here are examples of what you can do to make your school a safe place:

- **Plan lawn care and groundskeeping for times when the windows are not open or after school hours**
- **Rake leaves when the student with CGD is not present**
- **Alert the student’s parents if an illness is going around the school**
- **Prohibit smoking on school grounds**

Suggestions to help keep pathogens at bay:

- **Keep bathrooms clean**
  Bacteria and fungi love bathrooms and locker rooms. When cleaning bathrooms or locker rooms, use strong cleaners, including bleach, to kill anything around and behind the toilet and on the floor to keep any bacteria and fungi from growing.

- **Remove plants from classrooms**
  Since potting soil can be full of fungi, the best place for a plant is outside. Replace plants with interesting lamps, pictures on the walls, and artwork scattered on side tables to make your classroom as unique as you want it to be.

- **Go carpetless**
  Try to avoid having carpet in the classroom of a child with CGD. If you’re installing or replacing a carpet in a room like a library, make sure the student isn’t in the room while it’s being removed. And make sure to wait a few days for any dust and germs to settle before he or she comes back into the room.