

Let's Talk About SpA



**1 in every 100
Canadians are
affected**



**Average time to
diagnosis is 7 to 10
years**



**Inflammation of the
spine, eyes, skin
and gastrointestinal
tract**



**Can be controlled
with medications
but there is no cure**



- Spondyloarthritis is a form of inflammatory arthritis. There are 7 types that can be broadly classified as axial or peripheral. The disease causes extreme pain in the low back, hips, and any other affected joints.
- It also has systemic effects including fatigue.
- The onset of SpA is usually in young adulthood.
- The disease is cyclic; occurring in periods of flares and remission.
- Disease progression can lead to irreversible damage such as spinal fusion.
- Due to the usual long time to diagnosis, some may go undiagnosed for years but still suffer from symptoms thus requiring accommodations.

Creating an Accommodation Plan

- Use this guide to facilitate your meeting with the school's accommodations advisor. It can help them better understand your situation and needs.
- Accommodations will vary based on your needs and may change throughout your academic career.
- Be open with your accommodations advisor. The more they know, the better they will be able to help you.
- Follow up regularly with your advisor and evaluate if there are adjustments to be made.
- If you need supporting documentations from your physician, clearly communicate your concerns to them so that they can fill out the paperwork appropriately.

Possible Accommodations



Flexible Attendance, Course Load and Due Dates

For classes requiring mandatory attendance, accommodations may be needed for sick days as well as for medical appointments. If you feel you are unable to handle a full course load, you may want to inquire about reducing your credits for some semesters. It is also possible to get extensions for assignments.



Modifying the Physical Environment

You should be able to request the use of ergonomic chairs and/or desks for assessments and in the classroom. You can also request to write written exams on a computer. If you are in a physically demanding program, an assessment from an occupational therapist may be required.



Exam Accommodations

Time based accommodations for exams can include extra time or stopwatch time. Stopwatch time allows you to pause your exam so that you can take breaks to stretch or move around.



Access to Lecture Notes

The accommodations office can provide you with notes from your peers for classes that you were unable to attend. This is usually done anonymously.

Why is an Accommodation Plan Important?

- Although you may feel that you do not need all of these accommodations at this time, the earlier you get a plan in place, the better. You do not want to end up experiencing a flare in the middle of finals season with no accommodations.
- Most accommodation plans are kept confidential and you are not required to explain your situation to every professor. However, it can be helpful to disclose your diagnosis if you feel comfortable. Many students have had positive experiences doing this.
- Your plan will help you thrive at your post-secondary institution and allow you to reach your fullest potential.



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