

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

## Accommodation and Compliance Series

# Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD, Acid Reflux)

Job Accommodation Network  
PO Box 6080  
Morgantown, WV 26506-6080  
(800)526-7234 (V)  
(877)781-9403 (TTY)  
jan@askjan.org  
AskJAN.org



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## Preface

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is funded by a grant from the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor. JAN makes documents available with the understanding that the information be used solely for educational purposes. The information is not intended to be legal or medical advice. If legal or medical advice is needed, appropriate legal or medical services should be contacted.

JAN does not endorse or recommend any products or services mentioned in this publication. Although every effort is made to update resources, JAN encourages contacting product manufacturers/vendors and service providers directly to ensure that they meet the intended purposes. This guarantees that the most up-to-date information is obtained.

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## **JAN'S Accommodation and Compliance Series**

### **Introduction**

JAN's Accommodation and Compliance Series is designed to help employers determine effective accommodations and comply with Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Each publication in the series addresses a specific medical condition and provides information about the condition, ADA information, accommodation ideas, and resources for additional information.

The Accommodation and Compliance Series is a starting point in the accommodation process and may not address every situation. Accommodations should be made on a case by case basis, considering each employee's individual limitations and accommodation needs. Employers are encouraged to contact JAN to discuss specific situations in more detail.

For information on assistive technology and other accommodation ideas, visit JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR) at <https://AskJAN.org/soar>.

### **Information about Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD, Acid Reflux)**

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a digestive disorder that affects the lower esophageal sphincter (LES)--the muscle connecting the esophagus with the stomach. Gastroesophageal refers to the stomach and esophagus. Reflux means to flow back or return; gastroesophageal reflux is the return of the stomach's contents back up into the esophagus. Many people have heartburn or acid indigestion caused by GERD, and some people have GERD symptoms due to a hiatal hernia. In most cases, heartburn can be relieved through diet and lifestyle changes; however, some people may require medication or surgery.

### **Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD, Acid Reflux) and the Americans with Disabilities Act**

The ADA does not contain a list of medical conditions that constitute disabilities. Instead, the ADA has a general definition of disability that each person must meet. A person has a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having an impairment. For more information about how to determine whether a person has a disability under the ADA, see [How to Determine Whether a Person Has a Disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act \(ADAAA\)](#).

## **Accommodating Employees with Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD, Acid Reflux)**

People with GERD may develop some of the limitations discussed below, but seldom develop all of them. Also, the degree of limitation will vary among individuals. Be aware that not all people with arthritis will need accommodations to perform their jobs and many others may only need a few accommodations. The following is only a sample of the possibilities available. Numerous other accommodation solutions may exist.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. What limitations is the employee experiencing?
2. How do these limitations affect the employee and the employee's job performance?
3. What specific job tasks are problematic as a result of these limitations?
4. What accommodations are available to reduce or eliminate these problems? Are all possible resources being used to determine possible accommodations?
5. Once accommodations are in place, would it be useful to meet with the employee to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodations and to determine whether additional accommodations are needed?
6. Do supervisory personnel and employees need training?

### **Accommodation Ideas:**

#### **Limitations**

##### Dietary Needs

- Flexible Schedule
- Mini Refrigerators/ Electric Coolers
- Policy Modification

##### Nausea

- Flexible Schedule
- Mini Refrigerators/ Electric Coolers
- Odor Control
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

##### Pain

- Flexible Schedule
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

### **Work-Related Functions**

#### Stress

- Behavior Modification Techniques
- Counseling/Therapy
- Flexible Schedule
- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Support Person
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Uninterrupted Work Time

## Situations and Solutions:

### **During the holiday season an employer hosts an employee appreciation luncheon.**

An employee with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and obesity was on a restrictive diet, which included avoiding foods and drinks that triggered severe symptoms. In addition to the food typically provided for the event, the employer agreed to work with the catering company to develop additional dishes that the employee would be able to eat. This accommodation benefited others with similar sensitivities to food.

### **An employee recovering from surgery, which was needed as a result of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), was not able to commute to work.**

The employee was able to perform most of their job from home but there was not enough work to support full time telework. The employee was able to find alternative transportation to the office two days a week and the employer agreed to provide telework three days a week.

### **An employee with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) requested leave in order to go to doctors' appointments.**

The employer offered a modified schedule instead, so that the employee could make up the time missed without needing to use accrued leave.

### **Because of medications being taken for gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), an employee regularly experienced fatigue in the morning and occasionally in the afternoon.**

The employer modified the employees schedule to allow for a later arrival and departure. The employee was also provided a space to rest during the afternoon, as needed.

### **An employee who experienced gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) requested accommodations due to an exacerbation of symptoms when experiencing stress.**

The employer worked with the employee to identify tasks that contributed to the employee feeling overly stressed during the workday. Although the employer did not have to eliminate essential functions of the job, they agreed to modify the employee's break schedule so they could step away from their work periodically, supervisory methods were adjusted, and higher cubicle walls were provided so that the employee was less distracted by others.

## Products

There are numerous products that can be used to accommodate people with limitations. JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource at <https://AskJAN.org/soar> is designed to let users explore various accommodation options. Many product vendor lists are accessible through this system; however, JAN provides these lists and many more that are not available on the Web site upon request. Contact JAN directly if you

have specific accommodation situations, are looking for products, need vendor information, or are seeking a referral.

## Resources

### **Job Accommodation Network**

West Virginia University  
PO Box 6080  
Morgantown, WV 26506-6080  
Toll Free: (800) 526-7234  
TTY: (304) 293-7186  
Fax: (304) 293-5407  
[jan@askjan.org](mailto:jan@askjan.org)  
<https://askjan.org>

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a free consulting service that provides information about job accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the employability of people with disabilities.

### **Office of Disability Employment Policy**

200 Constitution Avenue,  
NW, Room S-1303  
Washington, DC 20210  
Toll Free: (866) 633-7365  
[odep@dol.gov](mailto:odep@dol.gov)  
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep>

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Labor. ODEP provides national leadership to increase employment opportunities for adults and youth with disabilities while striving to eliminate barriers to employment.

### **American College of Gastroenterology**

6400 Goldsboro Road,  
Suite 200  
Bethesda, MD 20817  
Direct: (301) 263-9000  
[info@acg.gi.org](mailto:info@acg.gi.org)  
<http://gi.org/>

The American College of gastroenterology was founded in 1932 to advance the study and medical treatment of disorders of the gastrointestinal tract. Our mission is to advance world-class care for patients with gastrointestinal disorders through excellence, innovation and advocacy in the areas of: Scientific investigation, Education, Prevention, and Treatment

### **American Gastroenterological Association**

4930 Del Ray Avenue  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
Direct: (301) 654-2055  
<http://www.gastro.org/>

### **GIKids**

714 N. Bethlehem Pike  
Suite 300  
Ambler, PA 19002  
Direct: (215) 641-9800  
[naspghan@naspghan.org](mailto:naspghan@naspghan.org)  
<http://www.gikids.org/>

With GIKids, NASPGHAN and their foundation are working to reach out directly to families, kids and teens who live with digestive conditions to provide them with the information they need to understand and improve their digestive health, work with their health care providers, live a more independent life, and understand what works in plain language instead of medical jargon.

### **International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders**

PO Box 170864  
Milwaukee, WI 53217  
Toll Free: (888) 964-2001  
Direct: (414) 964-1799  
Fax: (414) 964-7176  
[iffgd@iffgd.org](mailto:iffgd@iffgd.org)  
<http://www.iffgd.org/>

The International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (IFFGD) is a Public Charity designated under the U.S. IRS code 501(c)(3). We are a nonprofit education and research organization dedicated to informing, assisting, and supporting people affected by gastrointestinal (GI) disorders.

**Mayo Clinic**

13400 E. Shea Blvd.  
Scottsdale, AZ 85259  
Direct: (480) 301-8000  
<http://www.mayoclinic.org/>

The Mayo Clinic's mission to inspire hope and contribute to health and well-being by providing the best care to every patient through integrated clinical practice, education and research.

**MedlinePlus**

8600 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, MD 20894  
[custserv@nlm.nih.gov](mailto:custserv@nlm.nih.gov)  
<https://medlineplus.gov>

MedlinePlus is the National Institutes of Health's Web site for patients and their families and friends. Produced by the National Library of Medicine, the world's largest medical library, it brings you information about diseases, conditions, and wellness issues in language you can understand. MedlinePlus offers reliable, up-to-date health information, anytime, anywhere, for free.

**National Center for Biotechnology Information**

8600 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, MD 20894  
[pubmedcentral@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](mailto:pubmedcentral@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information.

### **National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases**

Building 31, Room 9A06  
31 Center Drive, MSC 2560  
Bethesda, MD 20892-2560  
Direct: (301) 496-3583

<http://www.niddk.nih.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases conducts and supports research on many of the most serious diseases affecting public health. The Institute supports much of the clinical research on the diseases of internal medicine and related subspecialty fields as well as many basic science disciplines.

### **National Jewish Health**

1400 Jackson Street  
Denver, CO 80206  
Toll Free: (877) 225-5654  
Direct: (303) 388-4461

<http://www.nationaljewish.org/>

National Jewish Health is known worldwide for treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders, and for groundbreaking medical research. Founded in 1899 as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health remains the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to these disorders. *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked National Jewish Health as the number one or number two hospital in pulmonology on its Best Hospitals list ever since pulmonology was included in the rankings.

### **Remedy's Health Communities**

<http://www.healthcommunities.com>

Remedy Health Media is America's fastest growing health information and technology company. We are a leading provider of clinical resources and wellness tools that help millions of patients and caregivers live healthier, more fulfilled lives.

Our mission is to empower patients and caregivers with the information and applications needed to efficiently navigate the healthcare landscape and as a result, to permit better health outcomes through use of our products and services.

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