

JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

Accommodation and Compliance Series: Employees with Thyroid Disorders

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Preface

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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 <http://askjan.org/soar>.

Information about Thyroid Disorders

There are many different thyroid disorders that exist. The most common ones include: Graves' disease, Hashimoto's disease, hyperthyroidism, hypothyroidism, thyroid cancer, and thyroiditis. Key terms used to describe a specific thyroid disorder include:

- **Hashimoto's Disease:** Hashimoto's disease appears to be an inherited condition and is also known as chronic lymphocytic thyroiditis. It is most common in women who are between 30 and 50 years of age. With Hashimoto's Disease, the immune system attacks the thyroid gland in the neck, prohibiting it from producing hormones. Symptoms of Hashimoto's Disease are feelings of fullness/tightness in throat, trouble swallowing, swelling or bump in the front of the neck, tiredness, forgetfulness, depression, coarse dry skin, slow heartbeat, weight gain, constipation and intolerance to cold. Many people have no symptoms at all.

- **Hyperthyroidism:** Hyperthyroidism is a condition in which the thyroid gland produces too much thyroid hormone. It is 8 to 10 times more common in women than in men and is the 3rd most common thyroid problem in the US. Graves' disease is the most common form of hyperthyroidism. Hyperthyroidism can mimic other health problems, making it difficult to diagnose. It can also cause a wide variety of symptoms including sudden weight loss, rapid or irregular heartbeat, nervousness, anxiety, irritability, tremors, sweating, changes in menstrual patterns, increased sensitivity to heat, change in bowel patterns, an enlarged thyroid gland at base of neck, fatigue, muscle weakness, and difficulty sleeping.
- **Hypothyroidism:** Hypothyroidism is a condition in which the thyroid gland produces too little thyroid hormone. The most common cause of low thyroid production is Hashimoto's Disease, which is an autoimmune disease. The symptoms of hypothyroidism vary widely, depending on the severity of the hormone deficiency and develop slowly over years. Symptoms include increased sensitivity to cold, constipation, dry skin and hair, puffy face, hoarse voice, elevated cholesterol level, unexplained weight gain, muscle cramps, pain and stiffness in joints, muscle weakness, heavier menstrual periods, tiredness, and depression.
- **Thyroid Cancer:** Thyroid cancer is a cancerous tumor or growth located within the thyroid gland. Thyroid cancer is uncommon, accounting for only about 1 out of every 100 cancers in the United States. Thyroid cancer is often discovered by patients themselves when they see or feel a nodule or lump on the front of the neck.
- **Thyroiditis:** Thyroiditis is a general term used to describe different disorders in which the thyroid gland becomes inflamed.

Thyroid Disorders 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 Thyroid Disorders

People with thyroid disorders 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 who are aging 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. Has the employee been consulted regarding possible accommodations?
6. 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?
7. Do supervisory personnel and employees need training?

Accommodation Ideas:

Limitations

Decreased Stamina/Fatigue

- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Anti-fatigue Matting
- Elevating Wheelchairs
- Ergonomic Assessments
- Ergonomic Equipment
- Job Restructuring
- Periodic Rest Breaks
- Scooters
- Stand-lean Stools
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Walkers
- Wearable Anti-fatigue Matting

- Wheelchairs
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

Temperature Sensitivity

- Sensitivity to Cold
 - Air Deflectors
 - Fans
 - Flexible Schedule
 - Heated Clothing
 - Heated Ergonomic and Computer Products
 - Heated Gloves
 - Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
 - Vent Covers
 - Workstation Space Heaters
- Sensitivity to Heat
 - Air Deflectors
 - Cooling Clothing
 - Fans
 - Flexible Schedule
 - Portable Air Conditioners
 - Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
 - Vent Covers

Toileting/Grooming Issue

- Accessible Toilets and Toilet Seats
- Aide/Assistant/Attendant
- Flexible Schedule
- Grab Bars - Toilet Hinged Arm Support
- Grooming and Dressing Aids
- Independent Living Aids
- Modified Break Schedule
- Swing Away Grab Bars

- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Toileting Aids
- Transfer Aids
- Worksite Redesign / Modified Workspace

Work-Related Functions

Temperature

- Sensitivity to Cold
 - Air Deflectors
 - Cold Resistant Gloves
 - Flexible Schedule
 - Foot Warmers
 - Heat Resistant Gloves
 - Heated Clothing
 - Heated Ergonomic and Computer Products
 - Modified Break Schedule
 - Heated Gloves
 - Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
 - Vent Covers
 - Workstation Space Heaters
- Sensitivity to Heat
 - Air Deflectors
 - Cooling Clothing
 - Fans
 - Flexible Schedule
 - Modified Break Schedule
 - Personal Visors
 - Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
 - Vent Covers

Situations and Solutions:

A grounds keeping employee with hypothyroidism disclosed that he has trouble when needing to work outside during the winter due to the cold.

The employer provided the individual with heated clothing to wear while outside as well as periodic rest breaks to allow the individual to come back into the building more often to reduce exposure to the cold.

An employee with hyperthyroidism disclosed that he is very sensitive to warm temperatures, but the comfortable temperature for the building would be too cool for others to be comfortable.

The employer agreed to allow the individual to have a portable air conditioner at his workstation as an accommodation.

An applicant with hypothyroidism stated that his condition causes him to take longer than most people when using the restroom due to constipation.

The employer agreed to move the workstation to be close to the restroom and also arranged to allow a modified break schedule to accommodate these lengthier restroom needs.

An employee was recently diagnosed with thyroid cancer and is having trouble with attendance due to the fatigue limitations associated with the chemotherapy.

The employee is running low on paid sick leave. The employer allowed the individual to work from home to enable the individual to work more easily as well as providing additional unpaid leave as an accommodation on days when the individual simply cannot work.

An applicant with hyperthyroidism disclosed that she has difficulty sleeping because of her condition and may have problems making it into work punctually.

The employer agrees to allow the individual to have some flexibility in their start time and make up the time at the end of their shift to accommodate this need.

Products

There are numerous products that can be used to accommodate people with limitations. JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource at <http://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
<http://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
<http://dol.gov/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 Association of Clinical Endocrinologists

245 Riverside Ave.
Suite 200
Jacksonville, FL 32202
Direct: (904) 353-7878
Fax: (904) 353-8185
info@aace.com
<http://www.aace.com>

The American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists is a professional community of physicians specializing in endocrinology, diabetes, and metabolism committed to enhancing the ability of its members to provide the highest quality of patient care.

American Thyroid Association

6066 Leesburg Pike
Suite 550
Falls Church, VA 22041
thyroid@thyroid.org
<http://www.thyroid.org/>

The American Thyroid Association (ATA) is the leading worldwide organization dedicated to the advancement, understanding, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of thyroid disorders and thyroid cancer. ATA is an international membership medical society with over 1,700 members from 43 countries around the world

Fetal Health Foundation

9766 South Holland St.
Littleton, CO 80127
Toll Free: (877) 789-4673
info@fetalhealthfoundation.org
<http://www.fetalhealthfoundation.org/>

Fetal Health Foundation supports families receiving a fetal syndrome diagnosis, funds life-saving research, increases fetal syndrome awareness, and shares leading medical information on fetal syndromes.

Graves' Disease & Thyroid Foundation

P.O. Box 2793
Rancho Sante Fe, CA 92067
Toll Free: (877) 643-3123
Direct: (828) 877-5251
Fax: (877) 643-3123
info@gdatf.org
<http://www.gdatf.org/>

Established in 1990 as the National Graves' Disease Foundation, the Graves' Disease and Thyroid Foundation is the leading source of help and hope for people with Graves' disease and other thyroid related disorders. We provide education and support for patients, family members, caregivers, friends and healthcare professionals.

Light of Life Foundation

PO Box 163
Manalapan, NJ 07726
Direct: (609) 409-0900
Fax: (609) 409-0902
info@checkyourneck.com
<http://www.checkyourneck.com/>

The mission of the foundation (a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization) is to improve the quality of life of thyroid cancer patients through continual education of the lay public and the medical community, and by promoting research and development to improve thyroid cancer care

Living with Graves' Disease

<http://www.livingwithgravesdisease.com/>

You've found your way to the community created specifically for Graves' Disease sufferers. We are a public education organization for sufferers. We launched our first website about Graves' Disease and Thyroid disease in 1999.

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
<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>

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.

Created by the U.S. National Library of Medicine

National Academy of Hypothyroidism

<https://www.nahypothyroidism.org/>

The National Academy of Hypothyroidism is a group of thyroidologists, headed by Kent Holtorf, M.D., who are dedicated to the promotion of scientifically sound and medically validated concepts and information pertaining to the diagnosis and treatment of hypothyroidism.

National Center for Biotechnology Information

8600 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20894
pubmedcentral@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

MISSION: IMS brings together an international community of health care professionals, researchers, educators, and others to improve care and transform delivery of treatment to those suffering from soft tissue pain through the promotion and exchange of globally recognized research, education, and innovation in patient care.

National Fibromyalgia & Chronic Pain Association

31 Federal Avenue
Logan, UT 84321
Toll Free: (801) 200-3627
info@fmcpaware.org
<http://www.fmcpaware.org/>

The National Fibromyalgia & Chronic Pain Association (NFMCPA) is a 501(c)3 not for profit organization. We support people with chronic pain illnesses and their families and friends by contributing to caring, professional, and community relationships. Through continuing education, networking with support groups and advocates, and affiliation with professional organizations, the members of the NFMCPA have a place to be informed, get involved, and recognize achievements.

Office on Women's Health

Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW Room 712E
Washington, DC 20201
Toll Free: (800) 994-9662
Direct: (202) 690-7650
Fax: (202) 205-2631
<http://www.womenshealth.gov/>

The Office on Women's Health (OWH), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), works to improve the health and sense of well-being of all U.S.

women and girls. OWH serves as the focal point for women's health activities across HHS offices and agencies and leads HHS efforts to ensure that all women and girls achieve the best possible health.

Remedy's Health Communités

<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.

The Environmental Illness Resource

162 Bramham Drive

Oakdale Court

Harrogate, North Yorkshire, England HG3 2-2UB

Toll Free: (441) 423-528055

support@ei-resource.org

<http://www.ei-resource.org/>

The Environmental Illness Resource seeks to provide those with environmental illnesses with information of the highest quality in the hope that this will lead to improved quality of life and perhaps even recovery of good health. In addition, to provide a free and open online community in which members may exchange information between themselves and support each other in their healing journeys.

ThyCa: Thyroid Cancer Survivors' Association, Inc.

PO Box 1545

New York, NY 10159-1545

Toll Free: (877) 588-7904

Fax: (630) 604-6078

thyca@thyca.org

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

ThyCa: Thyroid Cancer Survivors' Association, Inc., founded in 1995, is an all volunteer nonprofit organization, guided by a medical advisory council of renowned thyroid cancer specialists, offering support and information to thyroid cancer survivors, families, and health care professionals worldwide.

Thyroid Foundation of Canada

P.O. Box 298

Bath, Ontario K0H 1- 1G0

Toll Free: (800) 267-8822

<http://www.thyroid.ca/>

The Thyroid Foundation of Canada is a non-profit registered volunteer organization whose mission is to support thyroid patients across Canada through awareness, education, and research.

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