



BALANCING ACT:

Considering a Medical Leave for Treatment

Making the decision to take a medical leave from school to seek eating disorder treatment can be challenging and overwhelming, but also life-altering and life-saving.

This complex decision should be made with the guidance of a trained eating disorder professional. Please call 1-800-RENFREW to schedule an assessment if you answer 'yes' to any of the below.

When Should I Consider a Leave of Absence?

- Your relationship with food/exercise and your body are getting in the way of the social and academic experiences
- You have medical complications as a result of your relationship with food/exercise
- You have had significant weight fluctuations in the past six months
- You are unable to take prescribed medications regularly
- Your mood or anxiety are having a negative effect on your relationships and/or academic performance
- You are engaging in self-injury and/or substance use
- You are experiencing suicidal thoughts
- Professionals or loved ones have recommended taking a leave of absence to focus on treatment

Eating disorders are dangerous and potentially deadly illnesses.

Early interventions have been shown to increase the chances for a full recovery. Treatment for any eating disorder should be considered urgent and be prioritized, even if symptoms appear to be mild.

Medical Risks of Eating Disorders

- Irregular heartbeat, low heart rate, fainting
- Shortness of breath
- Cold intolerance
- Amenorrhea
- Early onset osteoporosis/osteopenia
- Dental erosion
- Hair loss, growth of lanugo
- Impaired immune system
- Abnormal lab results
- Seizures

How to Pursue a Medical Leave

Different schools have varying policies for seeking a medical leave. Below are resources that may play a role in formalizing a leave of absence once you have made the decision to take one.

High School

- Guidance Counselor
- Teacher
- Principal

College or University

- Dean of Students
- Student Health Center/
College Counseling Center
- Office of Disability Services

Students returning from a medical leave often report that it was beneficial and helped with academic goals. A medical leave means you have an illness for a temporary time and that you have the right to reasonable accommodations for that illness.

Health is the foundation for succeeding in school and achieving your academic and occupational goals.
No class, grade, club, or team is more important than your health and well-being.