

# How chronic illness affects children in school

There are over **4 million** elementary school-aged children with chronic illness in the U.S.

Every chronic illness is different but most affect a child's educational experience in similar ways. Chronic illness may affect a child's:



## School attendance



Chronic illness symptoms and treatments can limit a child's ability to attend school regularly. In fact, each year **1 out of 4** elementary school-aged children with chronic illnesses miss seven or more days of school due to illness.



## Ability to participate in physical activity and in the classroom

The physical effects of chronic illnesses vary greatly by the type and severity of the illness and the medical treatments a child receives. However, **2 out of 3** elementary school-aged children with chronic illnesses have one or more physical symptoms including difficulty breathing or swallowing, blood circulation issues, and physical pain.

## Ability to process information and learn



Chronic illness may affect a child's ability to process information and learn. Among elementary school-aged children with chronic illnesses, nearly **3 out of 5** have difficulty learning, understanding, and paying attention.



## Behavior

Chronic illness symptoms and treatment side effects may cause behavior changes. Indeed, **1 out of 2** of elementary school-aged children with chronic illness experience behavioral difficulties, including acting out, fighting, bullying, or arguing.

## Social connectedness to peers

Chronic illness may affect a child's ability to make friends and navigate social situations. Among elementary school-aged children with chronic illnesses, **1 out of 3** have difficulty making and keeping friends.

