

HIDDEN DISABILITIES

Globally 1 in 7 of us live with a disability. And of those, 80% are invisible. That is 1 billion people who are living with a non-visible disability.

While some of us experience a disability that is visible, many of us have a non-visible impairment or condition. These non-visible disabilities, also known as invisible or hidden disabilities are not immediately obvious. They can be physical, mental or neurological and include, but are not limited to, Autism and Asperger Syndrome, cognitive impairments such as learning difficulties and dementia, as well as mental health conditions and speech, visual impairments or hearing loss. They also include respiratory and chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, chronic pain and sleep disorders when these significantly impact day-to-day life.

And often, many people experience a combination of both visible and non-visible impairments and conditions.

What is a hidden disability?

A person is considered to have a disability if he or she has difficulty performing certain functions (seeing, hearing, talking, walking, climbing stairs and lifting and carrying), or has difficulty performing activities of daily living, or has difficulty with certain social roles (doing school work for children, working at a job and around the house for adults).



Invisible disabilities, also known as Hidden Disabilities or Non-visible Disabilities, are disabilities that are not immediately apparent. Typically, they are chronic illnesses and conditions that significantly impair normal activities of daily living.

Living with these conditions can make daily life more demanding for many people. They affect each person in different ways and can be painful, exhausting, and isolating. Without visible evidence of the hidden disability, it is frequently difficult for others to acknowledge the challenges faced and as a consequence, sympathy and understanding can often be in short supply.

Examples of Hidden Disabilities

While this list is by no means exhaustive, some examples of hidden disabilities include:

- Autism
- Brain injuries
- Crohn's Disease
- Chronic pain
- Cystic Fibrosis

- Depression, ADHD, Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, and other mental health conditions
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Learning difficulties, including dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, and language processing disorder
- Lupus
- Visual and auditory disabilities. These could be considered visible if the person with the disability didn't wear support aids such as glasses or hearing aids

People with non-visible disabilities want to be treated with respect and as individuals – just like people with visible disabilities and the general population. Even though you cannot see evidence of a disability, the disability still exists.

Nobody has to tell you they have a disability, or explain what it is. People can choose to keep this private. Some people may choose to wear a lanyard or carry a badge to show that they have a nonvisible disability. It shows they may need extra support whilst travelling or shopping. Other people with non-visible disabilities prefer not to do this. Some people may wear a different lanyard or badge to alert you to their disability or 'impairment'.

Raising Awareness

We can provide better support the more we understand about non-visible illnesses. Everyday things can be difficult for people with non-visible disabilities. These include travel, work, shopping and socialising.

Making sure not to judge someone based on whether their disability is visible or not is crucial.

Listening to disabled people and making sure accessibility is inclusive is important. This could help improve the lives of people with non-visible disabilities.

How Care first can help

If you feel you may need some support, you can contact Care first. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support.

Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence..