

## About Multiple Hereditary Exostoses (MHE): An Overview for Educators

### What is MHE?

MHE (also called multiple osteochondroma - MO or hereditary multiple exostoses - HME) is a rare genetic condition that causes non-cancerous bony growths (called osteochondromas) to form near growth plates. It can affect the arms, hands, legs, feet, ribs, spine, and other parts of the body.

### What Might You Notice in the Classroom?

- **Pain or fatigue:** Children may feel sore or tired even if they seem fine. This can affect focus, participation, or stamina during the day.
- **Mobility and physical limitations:** Some children may walk differently, need extra time to move between classes, or at times use mobility aids like braces or wheelchairs. This may vary by day with weather and seasonal changes, growth, surgeries, fatigue, and other reasons.
- **Increased medical needs:** Students with MHE may have surgeries, physical therapy, or imaging appointments. Recovery can require extended absences or modified participation in class, gym, or recess.
- **Impact on hand use:** Bumps on the arms, wrists, and fingers can cause reduced grip strength and dexterity, making handwriting, cutting, or fine motor tasks harder.
- **Social-emotional impact:** Visible bumps, scars from surgery or differences in movement can affect a child's energy, confidence, learning stamina and/or peer interactions. Fluctuations in pain intensity can contribute to changes in emotional well-being, including increased anxiety and depression, as described in the biopsychosocial model of pain.

### How Can Teachers Help?

- **Offer flexibility:** Allow for movement breaks, extended time on assignments, or alternate seating.
- **Communicate openly:** Check in privately if a student seems uncomfortable, tired, or needs help.
- **Support physical needs:** Work with school staff to ensure access to assistive devices, elevators, or classroom adaptations.
- **Cultivate inclusion and belonging:** Encourage participation in a way that honors the student's strengths. Avoid making children feel singled out.

"MHE might not be something you can see, but it affects me every day. Sometimes I just need a break or a little understanding."