

A summary for managing cystic fibrosis in the classroom

THINGS TO DISCUSS WITH THE CHILD'S PARENTS:

Medication:

- Medication required e.g. enzymes, salt tablets, Ventolin, salty drinks.
- Discuss with the parent what type of system will work for their child in terms of administering the enzymes and how many are required for different food items.
- Parents could provide a list of common classroom foods e.g. cupcakes, pikelets or popcorn and how many enzymes their child might need for these types of food so teaching staff are aware. See the enzyme bookmark at cfsmart.org for lists of food and enzyme amounts.
- If the child is in child care, the parents could be provided with the menus in advance in order to work out the amount of enzymes required and write the amounts on the menus.
- Any other medication required while child at school e.g. Ventolin or antibiotics.

Exercise:

- How much exercise can the child participate in?

Toilet habits:

- Easy (and quick) access to a toilet may be required.
- Be aware that the child may be embarrassed about the situation.

CF Diet:

- Extra high calorie drinks or snacks other than what the child might consume at recess or lunch may be needed to assist the child with weight gain.
- Some children with CF can take a long time to eat all their lunch, plus take their medication, so can miss out on part of their play time. Allowing the child to start eating their lunch a little earlier (to get a head start) can really help the child with CF with their nutritional needs and social needs.
- If your class is doing a healthy eating program it can be helpful if reference is made to the CF diet and how it is different from the healthy eating pyramid.
- Sometimes children with CF can become very confused when they learn about healthy eating habits at school and this can negatively impact on their calorie intake at home.

Things to let the child's parent know about:

- If the child is extra tired or there is a big decrease in energy levels.
- If the child is coughing more than usual.
- Communicate with parents if the child is on the toilet for long periods or going more frequently than normal.

 See [cfsmart.org](https://www.cfsmart.org) for lesson plan ideas

THINGS TO CONSIDER IN THE CLASSROOM OR CHILD CARE CENTRE:

Infection control:

- All students should wash their hands with liquid soap and dry with paper towels or hand dryer. Avoid shared towels and shared soap.
- Have a strong school policy about parents bringing sick children to school.
- Encourage all students to cough and sneeze into their elbow or sleeve instead of using their hands.
- Encourage appropriate use of antibacterial hand gel.
- Keep the child with CF at least a metre away from other children who appear to be sick.
- Avoid children in the class sharing eating utensils, cups or water bottles with other students.
- Include hand washing and germ lessons as part of the learning program.

Exercise:

- Hydration for when participating in physical activity.
- Extra rest if the child needs it.
- Toilet breaks.
- Tissues if coughing up mucus.

Homework:

- Discuss with parents in advance about possible homework which could be undertaken if the child has to go to hospital or is at home on IV treatment.
- There is also a hospital school service available in each state hospital, to liaise with in regards to school work.

Minimise the child's exposure to the following:

- Fish tanks in class rooms: ok as long as they have a cover on them.
- Water play, water toys.
- Excursions, where hay, ponds.
- Swimming: change rooms?
- Soil: gardening, keep exposure to 15 minutes or less.
- Air-conditioning unit : needs to be serviced on an annual basis.

Cross infection if other students with CF in the school:

- Only one person with CF should be in a classroom, unless they are siblings who reside in the same home.
- People with CF should keep more than a metre apart from others with CF.
- People with CF should not travel in the same vehicle such as buses or gather in common areas.
- At outdoor events such as sports days the children must maintain a distance from each other.
- Shaking hands, hugging or physical contact between people with CF is not recommended.
- If you are aware of a potential cross infection situation, work with both parties ASAP to develop a plan.
- For further support in this area either contact the CF clinic or CF organisation.

