

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 may need for these types of food so teaching staff are aware.
- Is any other medication required while the child is at school e.g. Ventolin or antibiotics?
- Any side effects of medications that impact on the child while at school?

Exercise:

- How much exercise can the child participate in? Is he/she likely to tire easily?

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:

- 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 or maintenance.

- 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 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.

Are there any specific CF symptoms that you need to be aware of?:

- Any potential emergency situations?
- Hospital admissions in the past?
- Likely to be admitted during the year?
- Psycho-social issues e.g. phobias, anxiety, embarrassment?

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:

Infection control:

- All students should wash their hands with liquid soap and dry with paper towels or a 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. See [cfsmart.org](https://www.cfsmart.org) for lesson plan ideas

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: avoid change rooms if possible.
- Soil: gardening, keep exposure to 15 minutes or less
- Air-conditioning : have serviced annually.

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.

