

Starting School with CF

Here are some tips to consider when your child who has CF is just about to start school:

Choosing a school for your child

- How eager is the school to learn about CF? Some are willing to research and also want all the teachers to have an understanding and may ask about where they can receive more education (which is a good sign).
- Do all the toilets for the students from kindergarten to Year Six have soap and paper towels or hand dryers available? Do the students have access to hand gel in the classroom?
- Are all children taught about good hand washing practices, how often? Are notes sent home about sick children coming to school?
- What is the school's infection control policy? What happens when children are unwell and come to school?

Collaborating with the school

- Develop a good relationship with a key contact person at the school who you can liaise with each year or regularly if there are any concerns during the year such as the deputy, school nurse or principal.
- Educating the school and teachers about CF is an ongoing process. You will, in most cases need to provide detailed information about your child's needs to the class teacher each year and sometimes if the class teacher changes during the year it is good to meet with the new teacher.
- When speaking to the teacher or deputy about your child's needs you will require at least an hour. It is good if you are able to have the meeting before your child starts school, but if this is not possible, ask the administration if they could book you in with the class teacher in the first week of school. Usually teachers have two days of meetings, planning and professional development before school starts for the year, and sometimes they are available then to have a meeting with parents then.
- You will be required to fill out a Student Health Care Form for your child and this will need to be updated on an annual basis or more often if your child's medical details change during the year. For a sample of a health plan see [cfsmart.org](https://cfsmart.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/student-health-support-plan-for-cf.pdf) (<https://cfsmart.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/student-health-support-plan-for-cf.pdf>) There is also a blank health plan-



where teachers or parents can fill out the specific details. The school will have their own type of form, so this form is designed as a guide for either parents or teachers.

- Communicate regularly with the school, be clear about your child's needs, be realistic about what the teacher can do and teach your child good hygiene practices.

Disclosure

- Everyone is different in how many people in the school community they want to know about their child's CF. It is good to think about this before your child starts school and your thoughts might change as your child gets older. Your child may change his or her thoughts too. Some children are very private and some are happy for others to know about CF.
- Some parents choose to let the wider school community know and they might ask to say a few words at the parent information evening at the start of the year, or ask the class teacher to send a note home to other parents.
- Find out how much your child knows about CF. How he or she talk about things will if other students ask questions. "I take these tablets to help my tummy work". This might be something to think more about as your child gets older.

Getting ready for school

- Practice having lunch or recess with your child at home or in a park with the lunch packed in a lunch box as you would for school. Talk about what might happen at school with your child taking enzymes.
- Take your child to visit the school to see where the classroom will be and the play areas.
- Discuss hand washing and practice at home with your child.
- Discuss and practice what the school routine might be e.g. getting up and doing physio, then getting dressed for school, packing school bag.
- Not all children are able to swallow their enzymes by the time they start kindergarten so don't worry too much. As long as the teachers understand the details about how much apple puree and why it's needed.
- Make a book with your child about what it will be like at school, with drawings or photos and read the book together.
- There are some good tips on getting ready for school (non CF specific) on www.kidsmatter.edu.au

Useful Resources

- cfsmart.org is a website with downloadable resources about CF in school for teachers, parents and students. The resources consist of:
 - Teacher booklets about CF for early childhood, primary school and high school
 - A sample letter explaining CF to other parents for the cold/flu season
 - Enzyme bookmarks
 - Bookmarks about CF for students/ parents
 - A CF Summary for relief teachers
 - A sample of a Student health support plan for CF
 - Hand washing poster
 - Lesson plans for early childhood teachers
 - Facebook page
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-WVOBTW6iA> “Good Clean Hands” by CFWA about hand washing in school. Appropriate for children aged 3 to 8.
- In some states, the CF Clinic or Hospital School will run a Professional Development day about CF for teachers to attend.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkqRPeROGXM> an animation explaining CF, appropriate for ages 4 to 11.
- Some CF organisations have staff members available to visit your child’s school to provide education sessions about CF with teaching staff, students and other parents.
- Some CF organisations can also post out CF School information packs either to parents or teachers and schools.
- Other parents have great practical advice about setting up a good system with the teacher for enzymes, lunch box ideas, their own educational resources for schools/ teachers.

Contact your local CF office

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Disclaimer: The information contained herein is provided in good faith. However accuracy of any statements is not guaranteed by Cystic Fibrosis Australia. We provide the information on the understanding that persons take responsibility for assessing relevance and accuracy. Individuals are encouraged to discuss their health needs with a health practitioner.

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