

Going to Day Care with CF

Many parents feel anxious about sending their child to day care, and this is totally normal for any parent. Many children with cystic fibrosis (CF) go to day care and it is something that can be well managed with a supportive centre.

We have created this checklist to help you when choosing a day care and some things you might want to consider.

When Choosing a Centre

- Have a tour of the day care. Meet with the centre director. Get a feel of the centre and if they will be able to provide the level of support you feel comfortable with.
- Are there any other children with CF attending the centre? If so, you may want to look at choosing a different centre as the risk of [cross-infection](#) would be high.
- What is their medication policy? E.g. storage and administration of enzymes or other.
- Do they have a whole centre approach to good hand hygiene? Does the centre feel clean and well looked after?
- What is their illness policy? Are sick children sent home immediately? Can they notify you if there are lots of germs at the centre etc.
- Are there environmental risks? E.g. wet areas, mulch, mud, animals etc. (what are you comfortable with?).

Health Care Plan

Once you have chosen a centre you should fill out a detailed [Health Care Plan](#) including medications, dietary requirements, contact details for parents and relevant health professionals, as well as an emergency action plan if needed. This is an important tool for educators to refer to.



Disclosure

There isn't a "right" or "wrong" way to disclose that your child has CF - there is a spectrum of disclosure, from keeping it to yourself to telling everyone. A good starting point is to let your centre director know your child has CF to ensure they manage the risk of cross-infection if there are other children with CF and to ensure there is a plan in place to manage any medications required during care.

Each family will manage this differently, whatever you are comfortable with and will ensure that you and your child will have a good time at day care is what is most important.

Educating the Staff

Educating staff about CF is important so they understand the needs of your child while he or she is at day care. Set up a meeting with the centre director and as many staff as possible, particularly the lead educator from the room your child will be in.

Key points to discuss are:

- What is CF?
- Medications e.g. enzymes, salt, Ventolin, antibiotics.
- Dietary requirements e.g. extra snacks? high fat?
- Bowel issues/toilet needs.
- Infection prevention and control e.g. importance of hand hygiene, germs, environmental risks, cross-infection risks.
- Dehydration e.g. need for a water bottle, salt tablets/solution or salty drinks.

Educating staff will be an ongoing process and will need to be revisited regularly with changes to your child's treatment plan, changes in staff or your child changing rooms within the centre.

CFWA can help by accompanying you to the meeting or offering a formal education session with staff. We also have resources for staff including E-learning modules you can request the staff to complete (link below).

Nutrition

If the centre provides food, you will need to consider enzyme needs for each meal. They should be able to provide you with a list of meals and ingredients in each, which would enable you to calculate enzymes needed for each of the meals and provide this to the centre.

If necessary, you may need to look at options for high calorie meals for your child. If this isn't possible, perhaps you may have to provide extra high-calorie snacks.

If the centre doesn't provide food, you will need to organise a system with the centre to inform them of how many enzymes your child will need with each snack/meal.

Talk with staff about how to manage giving Creon, and don't forget to talk them through different scenarios, such as what to do when your child has been given a dose of Creon but then doesn't want to eat their food. Daycare staff should notify you of such events at the end of the day.

Infection Control

Avoiding infection is one of the main parental concerns. Illnesses like coughs and colds are unfortunately common in day care settings. Your child, like all of their classmates, are likely to pick up some of the bugs and illnesses that go around.

The risk can be lessened through simple but effective infection control procedures, such as hand washing, using hand sanitising gels, opening windows where possible, and asking staff to keep other children with coughs and colds separate from your child, or sending them home where appropriate.

You should also make sure your child is up-to-date with routine [immunisations](#). This is a national standard for children attending day care. Influenza vaccine is also recommended, particularly for children with CF.

Tips for Transitioning to Day Care

- Go for visits to the centre with your child. Enjoy spending time there together with the other children and exploring their play space. After a few visits try leaving them for 30mins-1 hours if the centre permits.
- Pack all their home essentials to make them feel comfortable e.g. comforter, dummy, sleeping bag.
- Start with shorter days if possible.

Useful Resources

- [Starting Kindy with CF \(CFSmart\)](#)
- [A Guide to CF For Early Childhood Educators \(CFSmart\)](#)
- [CF E-Learning \(CFSmart\)](#)
- [CFWA Factsheets](#)

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