

Infection Control in Schools

Common Germs and Viruses

The thick, sticky mucus that builds up in the lungs of a person with cystic fibrosis (CF) provides a perfect environment for germs to thrive and multiply. Viruses such as the flu, colds, whooping cough, gastro and chicken pox can have severe and lasting effects on the lungs of a child with CF.

Although germs are everywhere and can't always be avoided, good infection control programs within schools can significantly lower infection rates.

Good infection control practices in schools should include:

- A strong school policy about parents not bringing unwell children to school is implemented.
- Students have access to soap and paper towels.
- Students are encouraged to use antibacterial hand gel appropriately such as after blowing their nose.
- Students are taught good hygiene practices, such as hand washing and coughing and sneezing into their elbow or sleeve.
- Students are taught about germs as part of the learning program.
- Keeping the child with CF away from other children who appear to be sick.
- Avoiding children sharing eating utensils, cups or water bottles.



Environmental Bacteria

There are also bacteria found naturally in the environment, which don't pose a risk to normal, healthy lungs, however, can cause serious damage to the lungs of children with CF. Once contracted, these bacteria can be difficult to treat and eradicate. Examples include *Pseudomonas* and *Burkholderia Cepacia*. They are commonly found in stagnant water, mould and soils.

Environmental risks to consider in the school environment, include:

- Water play/water toys with holes in them- these can contain stagnant water and/or mould.
- Excursions- consider the environment. Farms with hay or areas with lakes or ponds can pose a risk.
- Swimming pool change rooms- these can contain stagnant water.
- Gardening- soil can pose a risk. Often short periods of exposure are ok, or a

face mask can be useful.

- Air-conditioners- should be serviced on an annual basis to reduce the risk of harmful bacteria.
- Fish tanks- these can contain stagnant water and/or mould. They should be kept clean and have a cover on them.

School activities which can pose a risk to a child with CF should be discussed with the child's parents beforehand, as their involvement should be at the parent's discretion.

Cross-Infection Among People with CF

If someone with CF has contracted a harmful bacteria, they can pass them on to others with CF, via both direct (touch) and indirect contact (surfaces, sneezing). This is known as [cross-infection](#). For this reason, people with CF should not come within 4 metres of one another. There should never be more than one child with CF in a classroom. More than one child with CF in a school can be managed, however parents will need to be informed if this is the case.

People with CF (unless siblings) should avoid:

- Shaking hands, hugging or kissing.
- Sharing common objects like pens, toys and computers.
- Being together in enclosed or poorly ventilated places like cars.

Useful Resources

- [CFSmart- CF Education Program](#)
- [CFWA School Education](#)
- [CFWA Factsheets](#)
- [Good Clean Hands video \(CFWA\)](#)

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