

Starting School with CF

Starting school can be an exciting and daunting time for parents, particularly when your child has cystic fibrosis (CF).

Partnering with your school, especially in the early stages can help ensure your child's education and school experience is not limited by CF.

Choosing a School for Your Child

Choosing a school is a personal decision with many factors to consider for each family. Some questions to consider may be:

- Ask if there are any other children with CF enrolled at the school (this does not necessarily mean you cannot enrol, but is important to consider with [cross-infection](#)).
- Is the principal/deputy willing to learn about CF, and encouraging of their staff doing the same?
- Do the student toilets have soap and paper towels/hand dryers available?
- What is the school policy on [infection control](#)? Are children who come to school unwell sent home?

Collaborating with the School

- Develop a good relationship with a key contact person at the school that you can liaise with about your child's needs, such as the deputy, school nurse or principal.
- Try to make contact with the school before your child starts, so you can provide information and education about CF and what your child's needs



are. Educating the school about CF is ongoing.

- Usually teachers have two days of meetings, planning and professional development before school starts for the year, and sometimes they are available to have a meeting then.
- You will be required to fill out a Student Health Support Plan and this will need to be updated on an annual basis, or more often if your child's medical details change. Here is a [sample plan](#) from CFSmart.
- 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

- There is no right or wrong approach to disclosure – each family should disclose CF in a way that suits them.
- How many people do you want to

know about your child having CF? It is good to think about this before your child starts school. Your or your child's thoughts might change over time.

- Some people 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. Here is a [sample letter](#) from CFSmart.

Getting Ready for School

- Discuss and practice what the daily school routine might be e.g. getting up, doing physio, getting dressed, packing school bag.
- Practice having recess or lunch at home with their lunch packed in a lunch box as you would for school. Talk about how their enzymes will be packed in their lunch box.
- Take your child to visit the school to see where the classroom, play and lunch areas are.
- Practice learning to swallow tablets. It is not a necessity, but it might make life easier if your child can do this by the time they go to school. We have a pill swallowing factsheet for more information, and our Community Nurse can also assist with [pill swallowing](#). Contact nurse@cfwa.org.au.

CFWA's Education Officer is available to visit your child's school and provide CF education. Contact education@cfwa.org.au for more information.

Useful Resources

- [CFSmart](#)
- [Starting School with CF- Parent Information Booklet \(CFSmart\)](#)
- [I Am Starting School This Year- Interactive Child Booklet \(CFSmart\)](#)
- [A Guide to CF for Early Childhood Educators \(CFSmart\)](#)
- [CFWA Factsheets](#)

Last reviewed June 2021