Cystic Fibrosis Questions & Answers

When your child goes to day care or school, they may get asked questions about CF by other curious children. It's a good idea to make sure your child is prepared for these questions. We have created a list of some questions other children might ask, with example answers that may your child may find helpful.

Q: What does CF stand for?

A: Cystic Fibrosis

Q: What is CF?

A: CF is a condition that I was born with. It affects my lungs and my tummy. It means I have to take tablets to help me digest my food and take extra care of my lungs otherwise I'll get sick. But I can still do all the fun things that all kids do!

Q: Can people catch it?

A: Nope! You can only have CF if you were born with it, so other people can't catch it from me.

Q: Why do you have CF?

A: I got it from my mum and dad (it's a genetic condition). It's something I was born with.

Q: Why do you cough so much?

A: Everyone's lungs make mucus (sticky stuff) to help their lungs work. But my lungs are a bit different to other people. Because of my CF, my body can make too much sticky stuff in my lungs and I have to cough more to keep them clean (to get the sticky mucus out). It's actually important for me to cough to keep me well.

Q: Why do you have to take tablets?

A: I have to take tablets before I eat because my tummy doesn't digest some things properly. If I don't take them I will get a sore tummy.

Q: Why are you different?

A: I am different but so is everyone. It's just one thing about me. It doesn't stop me doing anything (I'm still awesome!)

Q: Are you sick? Do other people have to be careful around you?

A: Even though I have CF I can do the same things as all other kids (like dancing and sports). I just have to do a few extra jobs to make sure I stay well.

Q: What extra jobs do you have to do to stay well?

A:

1. Physio: Physio helps to push the sticky mucus up out of my lungs. Doing my physio helps make my lungs stronger and cleaner!
2. Take tablets: CF affects my tummy. This means I have to eat lots of food to help me stay healthy and strong. Whenever I eat food with fat, I have to take tablets called enzymes. But I don't have to take enzymes for some foods like fruit or juice. Enzymes help my body to digest my food so I can stay healthy and strong. If I don't take my enzymes I might get a sore belly or smelly poos.
3. Wash my hands: This keeps the bugs away. I need to make sure I wash my hands:

- After I go to the toilet
- Before meals
- If I touch something yucky

4. Stay away from people with coughs, colds and runny noses: It's good to try and stay away from people who are sick. If I can't stay away – I can:
    - Turn my body away.
    - Wash my hands
5. Exercise: I need to do lots of exercise every day. It's good to find different kinds of exercise that I like to do.
6. Antibiotics: They are medicine I need to take, to get rid of bugs which can make me sick and give me chest infections.

Q: What are bugs?

A: Bugs are like germs that can get caught in our lungs. Because I have extra mucus in my lungs, I am more likely to get bugs trapped in my lungs.

Additional resources: Cystic fibrosis questions & answers

- Book: *Who I Am! A children's guide to cystic fibrosis* by Brent Gairy (2012)
    - https://issuu.com/brentrg/docs/pulmozyme_story_book