Key points for schools about cystic fibrosis

Cystic fibrosis is the most common genetic disease in Caucasian people. It affects approximately one in every 2500 children born in Australia.

Cystic fibrosis was first recognised as a condition in the 1930s and, at that time, affected children rarely lived to their teenage years. However, with greatly improved treatments and understanding of the condition, average life expectancy is now well into the third decade, with many affected people living longer than this.

- Cystic fibrosis is not contagious.
- Students with cystic fibrosis must cough to clear their lungs. They should not be made to feel ashamed of their coughing or be asked to leave the classroom.
- Coughing bouts may sound alarming. However students with cystic fibrosis will not choke from coughing.
- Students may need to sit and recover from shortness of breath, especially when doing vigorous sports.
- Students may be smaller in stature, and thinner than their peers.
- Students may experience abdominal pain and cramping and it is likely they will have to open their bowels more often than usual. They may require extra toilet time and should not be made to wait.
- During high temperatures students with cystic fibrosis may be more tired and have difficulty concentrating.
- It is important that students have access to fluids and be able to drink when they want to.
- Students with cystic fibrosis may need to be excused from physically strenuous exercise in hot weather.
- It is helpful to bear a student's fatigue in mind when setting homework tasks and with requests for extensions.
- Children with cystic fibrosis may be bullied due to their smaller size, coughing, medical treatments and diet.

In general, children with cystic fibrosis are keen to learn and do well at school.

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