

Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

ADOLESCENCE AND CYSTIC FIBROSIS (CF) INFORMATION SHEET

WHAT IS ADOLESCENCE?

Adolescence is a name for the developmental stage you are in when you are 13-18 years old. During this time, you are transitioning into the second decade of life; you are no longer a child but on your way to becoming an adult! Adolescence can be exciting time! It is a time when you may be learning to drive, have your first date or first serious relationship, may be entering college or enjoying high school, working your first part-time job, be developing talents/hobbies that include sports, playing an instrument, and of course, socializing and shopping!

CAN I STILL DO ALL THIS EVEN IF I HAVE CF?

SURE YOU CAN, it will just take a little more work. It is important to remember that you need to take extra special care of your lungs during your teenage years. Studies have shown that although teenagers have more to lose during these years, they also have more to gain!

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOURSELF DURING YOUR ADOLESCENT YEARS?

1. Start taking charge of your medical care.

- Know your medications and treatments (the names, doses, time to take them, and how many times per day you need to take them.)
- Be the one to call your CF doctor/nurse when you are not feeling well, your CF symptoms have increased, you need a refill on a medication or you just have a question.
- Write down your questions for your CF team before you come to clinic appointments. This way, you can write down the answers to refer back to later. When you are in clinic, it is easy to forget what the doctor said or the questions you wanted to ask.

2. Share your feelings!

- Keep a journal about how CF makes you feel-physically and emotionally. You can share your worries, fears, frustrations and even your joy and happiness. Be honest, no-one has to see it except for you!
- It is not unusual to feel sad or confused at times. If you are feeling sad or confused, talk to someone you trust: a family member, friend, boyfriend/girlfriend, teacher, clergy member, school counselor, or your CF team. You have a social worker on your CF team who can help you sort through some of these feelings. The social worker will check-in with you during every clinic visit or you can call her/him at _____.

3. Exercise

- Exercise can help you emotionally by reducing stress. It also has positive health benefits for CF such as helping to keep your lungs free from mucus. Remember to ask your CF doctor before starting any exercise program. He/she will tell you what type of exercise you are able to do, how long is safe to exercise, and any precautions you may need to take.

4. Stay away from drugs and alcohol (this includes smoking cigarettes)!!!!!!!

- Cigarettes can decrease your lung capacity, make you less physically fit, stain/decay your teeth, make you more likely to get flu/colds, and even affect your taste buds so that you are not be able to taste and enjoy your food.

