

TRANSITION TIPS FOR TEENS

1. Take good care of your total “SELF” by paying attention to daily hygiene, good nutrition, your homework, friends, school activities, other interests, family chores, paid or volunteer work.
2. Learn as much as you can about what it means to “transition” yourself from pediatric to adult care. This exciting, though a bit scary, new stage of development is all about YOU and YOUR future! Read up on what transition is all about. Ask questions of your CF Health Care Team. All are eager to help you get ready **at your own pace** for a future that includes taking good care of yourself so that you can achieve everything you have in mind for the years ahead.
3. Try to become more aware of **your own cystic fibrosis**, including how your body behaves and feels when you are healthy compared to how your body behaves and feels when you’re starting to feel tired or “sick”. Ask yourself the following questions to learn how to really “listen” to your body and get to know **your** “signs and symptoms” when you are feeling at your best, and when you’re not:
 - What is the difference between a “healthy” cough and a “sick” cough for you? (Remember, everyone is different!)
 - What is your appetite like when you’re feeling good? Does your appetite change when you’re not feeling good? How?
 - What are your bowel movements like when you’re well? When you’re not feeling well?
 - How does your body feel when you have your usual energy to do all the things you want to do and need to do? How does your body feel when you don’t have your usual energy?
4. After talking with your parent(s), learn how to contact your CF doctor or nurse at your CF Center (860-545-9440) when you notice any changes in how your body is working, like: more “sick” cough, less appetite, more frequent or looser bowel movements, not being able to move your bowels, belly pain, feeling more tired, or feeling more congested in your chest or your nose.
5. Find out more about how good nutrition and good growth (both weight and height) help to grow your lungs to maximum size and keep them healthy and strong to fight infection. Ask your CF Nutritionist about the importance of “BMI” (Body Mass Index) and how to achieve the “BMI” that’s best for you!
6. Learn the names and doses of your CF medications, including enzymes, and ask your CF doctor how each of them works to keep you healthy and strong. Ask your parent(s) to teach you how to call your CF Center (860-545-9440) or your pharmacy for prescription refills. Take charge! You can do it!
7. Write down your daily CF care schedule (including medications, enzymes, airway clearance with vest, flutter, acapella, autogenic drainage, huffing) and post in your bedroom, bathroom or kitchen. Surprise your parent(s) by reminding them (instead of them reminding you!) of your daily CF care schedule!
8. Before each of your CF Clinic visits, write down your questions and be ready to “report” on your “signs and symptoms”, like how you feel when you’re well, compared to how you feel when you’re a bit more tired or sick. Be ready to ask your questions and give information to your CF doctor, nurse, nutritionist and social worker about how you’re doing (without your parent(s) there to speak for you)! Notice how “in charge” you are when you learn to do this on your own!
9. Think about what you may want to do in high school, and even after high school. Do you want to get your driver’s license? Do you want to go to work or get a volunteer job? If so, what kind of work might you like? Is this work environment healthy for you, or might it present some risks to your health with CF? Do you want to learn a trade, or go to college? How will you balance school/work and your CF care every day? Talk to your CF Social Worker about your plans, hopes and dreams for the future so you can start now to structure each day to include CF care. Remember, sticking to your CF care every day, although time-consuming, takes a lot less time than the daily care required when sick!

10. Learn more about how CF may (or may not) affect your sexuality, relationships with others, and your ability to have a family of your own someday, if that's what you might want. It may be easier for you to ask questions about these very private matters of your CF doctor, nurse or social worker without your parent(s) in the exam room. Also, your CF providers can give you written information, which will answer some or all of your questions. Just ask! And, know that you're not the only one asking! Considering how CF may affect your sexuality, fertility and relationships is an important part of transitioning from your teenage to adult years.
11. Learn about your health insurance! Your medical appointments at the CF Center and with your Primary Care Physician ("PCP") are not completely paid for by insurance. Each visit requires a "co-pay", usually a small amount (\$20-\$40) towards the larger cost of the visit, covered by your insurance company. Whether you are working or continuing your education after high school, you **NEED TO ALWAYS HAVE INSURANCE!!** Ask your parent(s) and your CF Social Worker about how insurance works for you and how a **CASE MANAGER** from your insurance company can help!
12. Have you thought about sharing your CF with old and new friends, extended family members, teachers, workmates and employers? You may, understandably, be somewhat reluctant to share your CF with everyone you have come to know. On the other hand, it can be quite helpful and comforting to *selectively* share your CF and what you do to stay healthy with people you trust, as they can support you in taking charge of your CF so it doesn't take charge of you! Talk to your CF Social Worker about sharing your CF with important people in your life. Together, you can come up with a good plan.
13. Have you been feeling a bit low or anxious? These feelings are normal for many young people, whether or not they have CF. Talk to your CF Social Worker about signs of depression and anxiety, as well as your alcohol/drug use, or disordered eating behaviors. If you are having difficulty going to sleep or staying asleep, feeling unusually tired, have less interest in friends or activities, reduced appetite, or concerns about gaining weight, your CF Social Worker is ready to listen and help. Unless you are in danger, your Social Worker will not tell your parents or your CF Team about your concerns. Taking charge of your emotional health is just as important as taking charge of your CF to live well!

RESOURCES

Healthy and Ready to Work
Health Care Transitions

http://www.hrtw.org/tools/check_assessment.html
http://hctransitions.ichp.ufl.edu/training_materials.html