

Your Child and Pre-School

- ☺ Pre-school education is a great opportunity to promote and encourage your child's self confidence and independence through activities and experiences in a peer based environment.
- ☺ Discuss in advance with your child that s/he will be starting in pre-school. Use positive and encouraging words which will highlight the fun activities that will occur there.
- ☺ It may be useful and fun to introduce your child to the service to see the play activities in that environment. This will help in establishing a positive relationship between the child and the pre-school.
- ☺ A child with CF may be used to spending a lot of time with his/her parent(s) due to illness. Be sure to provide support for any of your child's worries or anxieties about being separated for a period of time from their parents in a new environment.



Pre-school education is a really positive step for your child as international research suggests long lasting benefits for children who engage in high quality pre-school services. Every child has an entitlement to participate in the Free Pre-School Year (ECCE) Scheme and Cystic Fibrosis does not have to be a barrier to your child's participation in this scheme. Effective communication and collaboration between you and the childcare service will allow your child to enjoy their pre-school experiences to the best of their ability.

Free Pre-School Year Information

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme provides a free year of early childhood care and education to children of pre-school age. Children are eligible for the ECCE scheme if they are aged over 3 years 2 months and less than 4 years 7 months on 1 September of the year that they will be starting. The typical pattern for the free pre-school year is 3 hours a day, 5 days a week, over 38 weeks.

If you would like any additional support or advice please contact your local Childcare Committee who will be able to help you with any questions or queries.

Alternatively you can contact the Cystic Fibrosis Association of Ireland:

www.cfireland.ie

Phone: 01 496 2433 or Low Call 1890 311 211

Supporting Resource: Supporting Children with Cystic Fibrosis in ECCE Settings, Information for Practitioners.

Available at: www.corkcitychildcare.ie



How to Support a Child with Cystic Fibrosis (CF) in Pre-School:

A Guide to Help Parents Navigate the First Steps into Pre-School Settings





The reality of letting your child with CF attend a pre-school setting may seem daunting for some parents. However it is a very positive opportunity for children to develop their skills through various experiences. Active communication and collaboration between parent(s) and the childcare service means many barriers or worries such as medication and cross-infection can be addressed and managed effectively.

International research suggests there are long lasting benefits for children who engage in high quality pre-school. It offers many positive opportunities to encourage personal, social and emotional development along with promoting language, literacy and numeracy skills. Through the medium of play, the pre-school environment provides opportunities for children to develop good social skills, concentration, independence, confidence and their individual personality. It also helps your child to develop the ability to express themselves through a greater understanding of emotion.

Choosing a Pre-School Service for Your Child

A safe and loving environment where positive child/adult interactions are evident is the primary consideration when choosing a pre-school service that meets your families needs.

Other considerations include:

- ★ What are the opening hours of the service and the cost structure in place?
- ★ Does the service use Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, to guide their work in supporting children's learning and development?
- ★ What schemes are offered by the service? e.g. ECCE
- ★ Is a recent HSE Inspection Report available?
- ★ Are staff members experienced and trained childcare practitioners with relevant training in first aid and child protection?
- ★ What are the facilities both indoors and outdoors?

Specific areas you may want to consider:

- ★ Are there safe and hygienic facilities for sterilising equipment and/or food preparation?
- ★ Is your child's specific dietary requirements understood by all members of staff?
- ★ How many children will be in the group where your child will spend his/her day?
- ★ How do the practitioners manage and settle children who are upset either coming in or during the day? This may be particularly important for children who may be out for long periods of time.
- ★ If your child is to take medications e.g. antibiotics, enzymes, or inhalers during the day, how will the service facilitate this?
- ★ If your child experiences specific difficulties due to their illness e.g. physical movement, bathroom breaks, eating issues such as picky eater, discuss and collaborate with the service to identify the best means of managing these issues.
- ★ Decide how many days your child will attend the service. You know how tired your child may be after a full day of activities so collaborate with the service on how many days are manageable for your child. A range of two to five days is fully acceptable.

Practical Actions

After you have researched your pre-school options and chosen the best early years setting for your child, it would be very helpful to:

- ✓ Contact the pre-school service prior to your child starting to discuss the medical requirements of your child.
- ✓ Meet and discuss the symptoms of the illness with your child's key worker. Emphasise the importance of allowing your child the freedom to cough when necessary as a primary method of clearing phlegm that congests CF lungs.
- ✓ Clarify that children with CF have an increased susceptibility to infection and bacteria carried by others who do not have CF. Reiterate that the hygiene and illness policy & procedures within your child's setting is an important means of preventing cross infection.
- ✓ Highlight the importance of hand hygiene and the use of alcohol based gels in keeping infection at bay for your child.
- ✓ Discuss the procedure in place if more serious infections e.g. chicken pox or gastric illnesses, present within the school and what actions are taken to prevent the spread of infection.
- ✓ Reassure the service that common CF bacteria, or "bugs" such as *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (*Pseudomonas*) and *Burkholderia cepacia* complex, are NOT harmful to people who do not have CF.