

Should I tell my friends and classmates about my CF? (for secondary students)

There is no right or wrong answer to this question – everybody is different. In high school you will make new friends and meet new people. It's totally up to you whether you tell them that you have CF and when and how much you tell them.

Below are some ideas to consider when you are trying to work out whether or not you will tell people you have CF. High school is a good time to start exploring which choice you feel comfortable with.

What might happen if you do?

- If others know about your CF and you need extra support you have more chance of getting the help you need.
- Sometimes it's easier to be open. You don't have to make up a reason for your cough and medication for example. People will know you cough and need medication because of your CF and it won't be such a big deal.
- If you tell people about your CF you can ask them to treat you in ways that are helpful for you. For example, you can say "Because of my CF I cough more than other people but this is normal for me so don't worry." or "Because of my CF I sometimes have time off from school. Can you please take notes for me if I'm away?"
- If you tell people about your CF you will be able to tell them exactly how it affects you so they don't have to guess, or find information on the internet which doesn't apply to you.

What might happen if you don't?

- People won't know you have CF unless you tell them. Your CF can remain private.
- You won't have to answer any questions about what it's like to have CF. Sometimes people ask questions about having CF that might make you uncomfortable or ask you at an embarrassing time. If people don't know you have CF this won't happen.
- If people don't know you have CF they might ask you questions about why you cough or why you need to have medication at school. It can be hard to answer this question if you don't want someone to know you have CF.
- People won't treat you any differently to anyone else, if they don't know you have CF.



Some ideas to help if you do want to tell them

If you have decided to tell your friends and/or classmates you have CF you will need to think about what you want to tell them and how you will do it.

Here are a few different ideas.

Think of 2 or 3 ways that CF affects you which you can easily explain. For example, having chest infections, needing to do treatment and taking medication every day or needing enzymes to digest your food.

Try explaining CF to someone in your family or your best friend first, then you can practice and build up confidence.

Ask your parents how they explain what CF is to others.

You can talk one on one with people or do a presentation to your class or hold a Q and A session.

You don't actually have to explain at all if you don't want to! You could ask them to look at a fact sheet such as MY FRIEND HAS CF:

<https://www.cysticfibrosis.org.uk/what-is-cystic-fibrosis/my-friend-has-cf>

You know your friends like watching videos, or if they could have a look at 'What is cystic fibrosis' <https://youtu.be/4lGz5p4n8Fg> or 'The rest is up to me: Young people living with cystic fibrosis'

<https://youtu.be/BXU-dtaFzhw>



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