

CREATING ROUTINES TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL

Returning to school after an absence — whether due to a hospitalization or summer break — can be exciting and challenging for children with cystic fibrosis and their families. Families can use the information below with their care teams to get the support, information, and guidance they need to better manage school and daily care routines.

SCHOOL ROUTINES

Establishing routines often helps with transitions and may make it easier to stay healthy. Try to make gradual changes to get to your goal routine before school starts. If school has already started, it may be helpful to continue these routines through the weekend to support the transition period during the first few weeks back to school.

NUTRITION

Serve meals and snacks at the same time your child will be offered these on school days. This often means quick breakfasts and lunches.

- Plan who is going to pack lunches and/or snacks for school.
- Write grocery store lists and plan who will shop.
- Plan for how enzymes will be taken at school.
- Plan for staying hydrated at school.

DAILY CF CARE

- Plan a schedule for fitting in treatments and other kinds of daily CF care. This plan should allow an opportunity for at least eight hours of sleep and time to complete other activities and responsibilities including homework.
- Decide who is setting up treatments and medications. Include supervising and cleaning equipment in your plan. Be specific about who is doing what tasks.
- Think about the timing of using the bathroom. It should fit with your child's school routine and what they are doing during the school day.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Decide when and how your child will get their body moving during the day.
- Set a plan for family focused exercise each week.

PLAN FOR DECREASING SCREEN TIME

During breaks from school, many people have increased screen time. Making abrupt changes to screen time can be challenging without a specific plan. Recreational screen time (i.e., screen time not for school) can interfere with daily CF care, getting exercise, spending time with friends and family, getting enough sleep, and completing schoolwork.

- Set two-hour limits for recreational screen time, such as TV, video games, and tablets. It may help to gradually decrease access to screens instead of making the change all at once.
- Find other fun activities, such as exercise or games, to substitute for recreational screen time.

SLEEP

TIPS TO HELP WITH SLEEP WHEN GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

Sleep is an important part of building healthy back-to-school routines. When children don't get enough sleep, it can make it harder for them to do well in school and to feel good during the day. At the start of the school year, children can lose up to two hours of sleep a night due to changes in bedtime or wake-up times. Adjusting sleep times before the start of school may be helpful for your child and help with their success during the first weeks back at school. It often takes three to four weeks to adjust to a new routine.

One to two weeks before school starts:

- **Choose the same bedtime and wake-up time.** This helps children get the same amount of sleep each night. It also makes it easier for them to wake up in the morning.
- **Try to avoid too much sleep during the day.** Sleeping too long during the day can make it hard to sleep at night.
 - For older children who do not nap at school, try to keep naps between 20 and 30 minutes during the day.
 - Younger children may nap as part of school. Try to match their nap schedule at home to the schedule at school.
- **Set time limits for screen time.** Children who get more than two hours of recreational screen time per day can have later bedtimes and get less sleep.

Two to three weeks after school starts:

- **Allow for extra rest after school or on weekends.** The start of the school year can be a big change for children. Short — 20- to 30-minute — naps can help some children feel refreshed for homework or extracurricular activities.
- **Be prepared for changes in behavior.** You may find yourself struggling with your child in their CF care routine. Your child may argue or whine more, or seem quieter or withdrawn. These are all normal responses that should get better as your child adjusts to school.

For the remainder of the school year:

- **Keep the same bedtime and wake-up times on the weekends.** This will help improve transitions, such as Monday mornings.

If you have concerns past the first month of school, such as your child having trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or being too tired during the day despite a good night's rest, reach out to your CF care team and/or your pediatrician.

REFERENCES

Information on the impact of sleep on child well-being:

- [healthy-sleep-in-teens.pdf \(thoracic.org\)](https://www.thoracic.org/healthy-sleep-in-teens.pdf)
- [healthy-sleep-in-children.pdf \(thoracic.org\)](https://www.thoracic.org/healthy-sleep-in-children.pdf)
- [Preschool and Toddler Cystic Fibrosis Exercises – Cincinnati Children's](#)

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