

Cystic Fibrosis and Mental Health

Cystic fibrosis (CF) is a highly stressful disease both for the person diagnosed with CF as well as for caregivers and families. Consider the following:

- CF is a complex disease that impacts multiple organ systems, including the lungs and digestive system. Symptoms are diverse and can be a significant source of stress.
- Children and teens with CF are often prescribed multiple complex treatments which can take several hours per day¹.
- Children and teens with CF often require multiple clinic visits per year where they complete several procedures that can be stressful including labs and blood draws, pulmonary function tests (PFTs), physical examinations, etc.
- Even when following treatment recommendations, hospital admissions are not uncommon for children and teens with CF. In addition to the stress of being in the hospital, there are several other stressors that come along with an admission such as having to make up schoolwork and missing out on important social and extracurricular activities².

Given the stress that children and teens with CF experience, it is probably not surprising that they are at risk for the development of several mental and behavioral health problems including:

- Depression^{3, 4}
- Anxiety³⁻⁵
- Difficulty completing treatments⁶
- Sleep problems⁷⁻⁹
- Eating problems¹⁰
- Stress during major life transitions¹¹

In addition to increasing stress for children and teens with CF and their families, these sorts of problems have been linked to several physical health problems such as:

- Poorer lung functioning^{12, 13}
- Less frequent completion of treatments¹³
- Increased risk for hospitalizations¹⁴

Managing CF can also be highly stressful for the caregivers and family members of children and teens with CF. For example, caregivers of children and teens with CF may be at increased risk for problems such as:

- Anxiety and depression^{4, 5, 15}
- Difficulty managing treatments and other responsibilities like work, managing other children, etc.¹⁶

The integrated psychologist within the CF care team is here to help. Psychologists and other behavioral health providers within the CF care team can provide education, consultation, and evidence-based interventions to help support children and adolescents with CF as well as families of individuals with CF.

Additional Information and Resources:

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation:

[Mental Health | Cystic Fibrosis Foundation \(cff.org\)](#)

CF Peer Connect:

[CF Peer Connect | Cystic Fibrosis Foundation \(cff.org\)](#)

References

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