Cystic Fibrosis
Case History - Sandy

In this activity you will learn about the symptoms of cystic fibrosis by reading the case history of a cystic fibrosis patient. Read the case history carefully. Make a list of symptoms and when they appeared. Note how and when a diagnosis was made, and what treatments are being used. Also note the effects this disease has had on the patient's life, as well as things the patient is still able to do. You will then present your case to the class.

There are four different cases histories. By comparing the four different cases presented by your classmates you should get a good idea of the common symptoms and problems of cystic fibrosis as well as the variability of this disease.

Case History - Sandy

Sandy was born in 1973 and has a healthy non-CF older brother. Sandy appeared to be a healthy normal baby from birth until age 6 months. Then she got a cold and ear infection. Despite antibiotic treatment, Sandy did not get better, developed a cough, and started vomiting often. Following repeated vomiting she became so dehydrated she required emergency hospitalization. A sweat test at that time (7 months) showed she had cystic fibrosis.

Following diagnosis, Sandy began taking pancreatic digestive enzymes with her meals, which controlled her vomiting. These enzymes are necessary because thick mucus clogs her pancreas such that digestive enzymes do not reach her intestine. The enzyme supplements Sandy takes allow her to digest and absorb her food and gain weight at a normal rate.

At the age of 7 months Sandy also began chest physical therapy twice a day for an hour. While she is in an inverted position, one of her parents pounds on her chest to dislodge the thick mucus which accumulates in her lungs and leads to lung infections.

With the help of these treatments, Sandy avoided further hospitalization until age 9 when she spent several months in the hospital for a serious lung infection. She required IV antibiotics for several months. At that time she made friends with another CF patient, Mary.

Sadly, Mary died when Sandy was 14 years old. Mary's death had a profound affect on Sandy. Now Sandy believes that her medicines and therapy, although necessary, may not be enough to keep her alive. She has taken up running which she feels helps her both physically and emotionally. She has noticed an improvement in her CF lung symptoms since she has been running.