

# What Makes You Who You Are?

We look the way we look because of something called *genes*. Genes are pieces of information that make us who we are. We have genes that tell our eyes to be brown or our eyelashes to be long or our hair to be red.

Everyone is different. Many of our differences are due to the genes we are born with. Sometimes the information the genes give to our bodies can create problems for us.

One of the problems is a disease called Cystic Fibrosis. That is a hard word to pronounce. Some people say "65 Roses" to help them learn to say it. And some people just call it by its initials: CF.

When we don't understand something, sometimes we are afraid of it. There is nothing to be afraid of with CF. Just because CF is a disease does not mean it is contagious, like the chicken pox or a cold. You can never catch CF, even if you play with a friend who has CF. Even if your friend with CF has a bad cough, you can not get CF from him or her.

When a person with CF exercises and plays, he or she may cough. This is how the lungs clean themselves of the thick mucus. It is healthy for the person to cough. Sometimes people with CF have to cough even when they are supposed to be quiet (like in school or in the library). This can't be helped because their lungs are saying they must get rid of the mucus that is making it hard to breathe.

Your friend with CF may have to take medicine or do treatments. Maybe he or she wants to be left alone while they do this. Or maybe they would like you to keep them company. The best thing to do is ask them what they would like.

Most people with CF would like to be treated just like everyone else. We are all different, but we share many interests, enjoy many of the same things, and can learn so much from each other.