

## Dehydration

People with cystic fibrosis (CF) have an increased risk of dehydration which impacts many systems in the body, as it causes mucus to be thicker.

This can lead to an increased risk of infection in the lungs, as the thick mucus is more difficult to clear. Thicker mucus in the digestive system can lead to bowel obstructions.

### Why are People with CF at Greater Risk?

#### Greater Salt Loss

People with CF lose 3 to 4 times more salt from their sweat than those without CF. This puts them at increased risk during exercise, with fevers or infections and in hot weather.

#### Reduced Thirst Drive

The thirst sensation in people with CF does not turn on as quickly as for other people or may not be triggered at all. Normally, when people sweat, the salt levels climb in the blood and this high salt in the blood triggers thirst. When too much salt is lost, like in CF, the person doesn't feel thirsty even after a lot of body fluid has been lost.

#### Voluntarily Drink Less

Research shows that youth with CF drink 50% less than healthy counterparts when given access to unlimited water.



### Signs of Dehydration

#### Early Signs

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Poor concentration
- Feeling tired/fatigue
- Dry mouth
- Salt crystals on the skin
- Thirst
- Dark urine colour

#### Late Signs

- Loss of appetite
- Nausea/vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Thickened mucus
- Constipation

### Avoiding Dehydration

To prevent dehydration, both water and salt intake should be increased either through diet, supplements, or both. More salt and water may be required when you are unwell, have a poor appetite, are having tube feeds, have increased

exercise levels or live in a hot climate.

### **To avoid dehydration, people with CF should:**

- Take salt supplements (tablets or liquid for infants/children).
- Add salt to food e.g. table salt, sauces, gravies and condiments.
- Eat salty foods e.g. chips/pretzels, processed meats, rice crackers, white bread, salted nuts, bacon, baked beans, vegemite.
- Use 'salted' varieties of food.
- Drink plenty of water. Aim for 2-3 litres a day. Always carry a water bottle.
- Avoid exercising in the heat of the day.
- Drink sports drinks such as Hydralyte
- Avoid diuretic drinks such as tea, coffee, soft drinks and alcohol.

## **Salt Replacement**

Individuals should always be guided by a CF dietitian as to individual salt requirements based on signs and symptoms.

A general guideline indicates:

<b>Age</b>	<b>CF Population</b>	<b>General Population</b>
Infants	500-1000mg	120-170mg
Children	1000-4000mg	200-800mg
Adults	4000-6000mg	460-920mg

For further information contact your CF dietitian or CF Centre.

## **Useful Resources**

- [CFFood: CF Nutrition Resources](#)
- [Salt Replacement Therapy for Adults with CF \(NEMO\)](#)
- [CFWA Factsheets](#)

**Cystic Fibrosis WA**  
**The Niche**  
11 Aberdare Road  
Nedlands WA 6009

**T: +61 8 6457 7333**  
**F: +61 6457 7344**  
**E: [admin@cfwa.org.au](mailto:admin@cfwa.org.au)**

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