

# What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) if you have cystic fibrosis

## What is COVID-19?

- It is a respiratory virus that can readily spread from person to person. It can cause significant respiratory illness.

## How long does it take for symptoms of the COVID 19 to appear?

- Symptoms may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

## What are the common symptoms of COVID-19?

- Fevers
- Muscle ache
- Increased cough and sputum production
- Breathlessness

## How do people get infected with COVID-19?

It occurs by person-to-person transmission through:

- Breathing in infective droplets generated by coughing/sneezing from an infected person
- Direct contact with an infected person e.g. holding hands, kissing, touching.
- Touching a contaminated object with viruses on it, then touching mouth, nose or eyes.

## How does COVID-19 infection affect CF lung disease?

- What we know is that COVID-19 affects older adults more than children or young people. However, people with CF lung disease are likely to be more susceptible and have more difficulty fighting off COVID-19 than others.

## How can I protect myself?

Staying healthy is important if you have CF or if you are caring for someone with CF. You can protect yourself by following good infection control practices regularly as follows:

- Wash hands frequently for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid contact with sick people
- Avoid touching things in public spaces as much as possible
- Avoid shaking hands with other people
- Cough Hygiene
  - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
  - Cough into your elbow or the crook of your arm to reduce the spread of germs and throw away used tissues as soon as you can.
  - Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser if you cough or sneeze on them.
  - Encourage other people around you to do the same.

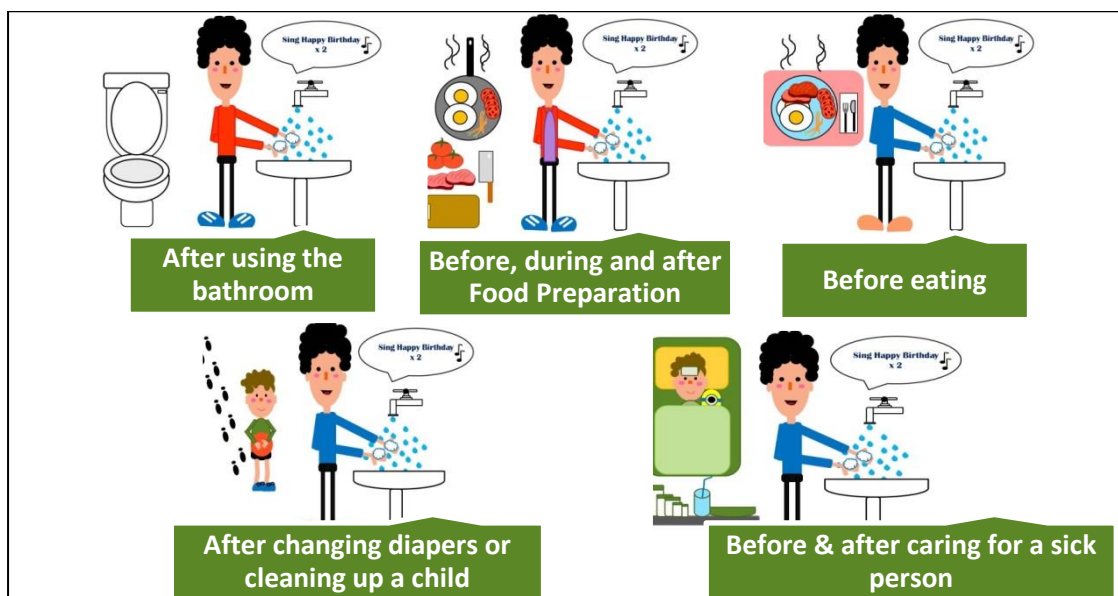
## What is the proper way to wash my hands?

- Soap & water OR Alcohol-based hand sanitizer with > 60% alcohol

- Wash for at least **20 seconds** – as long as you sing ‘Happy Birthday’ twice.



## When should I wash my hands?

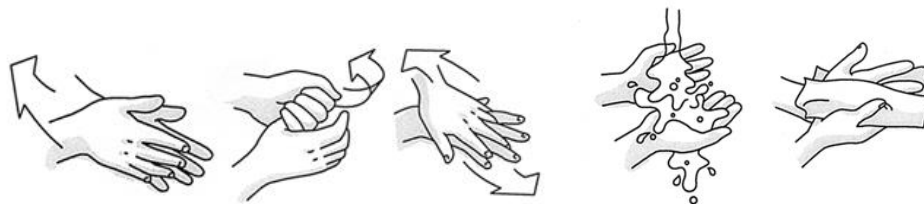


## What is the right way of washing my hands?

### (A) Soap and water

When hands are visibly dirty, wash them with soap and water.

- Wet your hands and apply the soap.
- Rub the soap all over your hands.
- Pay attention to the backs of your hands, fingers, the webbing between fingers, your thumbs, fingernails, fingertips.
- Rinse your hands under running water.
- Pat hands dry with a towel or paper towel.



(Source: [https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F\\_I/Facts-about-hand-hygiene](https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Facts-about-hand-hygiene))

## (B) Alcohol-based hand rubs (hand sanitiser)

- Use enough product to cover your hands.
- Rub ALL surfaces of your hands.
- Pay attention to the backs of your hands, fingers, the webbing between fingers, thumbs, fingernails, fingertips.
- Rub hands together until dry.



(Source: [https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F\\_I/Facts-about-hand-hygiene](https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Facts-about-hand-hygiene))

## Social Distancing

- Avoid crowds and busy places.
- Avoid contacts such as hugs, kisses, handshakes, high fives.
- Elbow connection instead:



## Avoid infection

- Avoid people who are unwell with cold or flu like symptoms (coughing, sneezing, runny nose). Maintain a distance of at least one metre.
- Obtaining your medications from the local pharmacy if possible.
- Organise your prescriptions well in advance. Don't leave renewing or filling a script until you are near or out of medication. This is particularly important if you are on CFTR modulators (Ivacaftor, Orkambi, Symdeko) - these authority scripts take more time to process.
- If these medications are only available at the hospital pharmacy, arrange for someone else to collect your medications, or ask if you can have it delivered.
- Consider shopping online so it's delivered to your home.
- Work from home if possible. Start the conversation with your employer to see if this is possible. Plans should be underway for this as part of general preparations in case the virus spreads more widely.
- Families of school aged children should consider participating in schooling from home. Engage with your child's school in preparation for school closures.
- Avoid public transport. If you have to travel to work or school using public transport, try starting and finishing later (or earlier) so you are not travelling during the rush hour.

## Stop smoking or exposure to second hand smoke

- Avoid being around people that smoke
- If you smoke, it's [vital to quit](#). People who smoke are five times more likely to get flu and twice as likely to get pneumonia.
- Quitting smoking is one of the best ways to protect yourself from viral infections, including coronavirus

## How do I stay well if the virus spread within the community?

Make plans to ensure you can cope if the spread of the virus causes significant disruption.

- Make sure you have enough supplies of food, essential items and pet supplies for at least two weeks
- Make sure you have enough medications
  - Make sure you have enough of all your medication for at least two weeks. There is no need to stockpile medication.
- Make sure you're taking your medications as prescribed
  - Stay healthy by taking your regular medications daily.
  - The better your lung condition is managed, the more likely you are to cope with complications should viral infections occur.
  - Ensure you perform your airway clearance twice daily to maximize airway hygiene.
- Make sure you eat healthily, exercise regularly and sleep well.
- Drink plenty of water with regular salt & electrolyte supplements.
- Be prepared to stay indoors AND have a plan to stay in touch with family, friends and neighbors regularly should this occur.
  - If the virus spreads widely within the community, authorities may move to increase protective measures.
  - You may be asked to avoid unnecessary social contact to prevent exposure.
  - You may be asked to self-isolate if you are infected with COVID.
  - Develop a plan to how you will manage at home in isolation for two weeks if required. This involves ensuring you have food, medications and essentials supplied by delivery services, family, friends or neighbors.
  - Plan how you can stay in touch with your family, friends, neighbors and your CF team e.g. telephone, telehealth and social media.
  - If you are caring for someone or have a carer, make a plan for how you will manage if one of you becomes unwell.
  - Stay in close contact with your CF team or CFWA during your home isolation period so you can access support readily.

## How do I look after my mental health during this time?

It's normal to feel worried at a time like this if you live with CF. It is important to maintain your mental well-being during this stressful period.

Here's some tips to help you cope:

- Stay in touch with your friends and family regularly. In stressful times we cope much better with support from those close to us
- Involve your family, including your children
- Discuss your concerns with your CF team
- Access support from CFWA

## Where are reliable sources of information?

- It is important to note that updates may change regularly
- Reliable sources include:
  - WA government website: <https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus>
  - Australian Department of Health: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>
  - CFWA Website: <https://www.cfw.org.au>
  - CF Australia website: [www.cysticfibrosis.org.au](http://www.cysticfibrosis.org.au)
  - Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080.
  - Smart Traveller: [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)
- Be mindful of constant media and social media coverage as it is often sensationalised and not evidence based.

## Should I wear a mask in the community?

- Yes, if you are unwell to prevent viral spread.
- There is no evidence to suggest that wearing a facemask will protect you from viral infections.
- For people living with CF, wearing a facemask for extended periods can make breathing more difficult.

## I have a holiday or work trip planned, what should I do?

- Reduce travel to a minimum if possible. The current advice (16 March 2020) to all Australians is to reconsider any non-essential overseas travel at this time.
- For up to date information please go to the Australian Government's Smartraveller website ([www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)).

## What will happen to my CF Outpatient appointments?

- Outpatient CF clinics at Perth Children's Hospital and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital will continue providing regular outpatient clinic appointments predominantly via telehealth or phone consultations.
- In person clinic visits remain open to those with an acute illness, those on home IV antibiotics or anyone requiring urgent assessments.

## Hospital Admissions – What should I do?

- If you feel you need an admission, please contact your treating CF team at the earliest opportunity so a bed can be arranged in advance for you.
- For unplanned hospital admissions, contact your CF team or present to your nearest Emergency Department in the event of an emergency.

Strict infection control procedures are in place in both Perth Children's hospital and Sir Charles Gairdner hospital to protect all patients, visitors and families.

**Note:** If you are concerned that you or your child has symptoms of COVID-19 or has a known COVID-19 contact, it is essential that you inform the CF team **BEFORE** your arrival so necessary arrangements can be made. Please call your CF team before arrival.

## Stay in close contact with your CF Team

- The CF team will endeavour to provide regular updates to all our patients in this period for support. Please stay up to date with information from reliable websites regarding COVID-19.

## What should I do if I am sick?

- If you start to feel unwell, do not go to school or work.
- Please contact your CF team for reliable advice straightaway.
- Contacts:
  - **Pediatrics CF team, Perth Children's Hospital**
    - Charlotte or Ali
    - Phone: 64560217
    - Email: [pch.cf@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:pch.cf@health.wa.gov.au)
    - Out of hours please contact the Respiratory Consultant on call via switch 64562222
  - **Adult CF Centre , Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital**
    - Sue Morey (Nurse Practitioner)
    - Phone: 0410430352
    - Email [sue.morey@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:sue.morey@health.wa.gov.au)
    - Out of hours please contact Sue Morey or the Respiratory Registrar on call via switch 64573333
- If you need further information and support, feel contact CFWA:
  - Phone: 6457 7333
  - Email: [info@cfwa.org.au](mailto:info@cfwa.org.au)