

Procedural Anxiety in Adults

What is Procedural Anxiety?

This is an excessive fear or worry about a medical procedure. Severe procedural anxiety can delay or even stop people from receiving the medical care they need. It is common among CF patients due to the frequency of hospital admissions and appointments that occur from a young age.

What Causes It?

It may be triggered by anticipation of pain, previous negative experience, sense of losing control, fear of something going wrong or worry about the results, such as a lung function test.

You may experience worry or anxiety in anticipation of, during and even after a procedure. Avoiding a procedure due to anxiety can have negative health consequences, so it is important to seek help and find ways to better cope.

Methods to Reduce Procedural Anxiety

- Learn about the procedure beforehand. This can increase your sense of control and allow you to properly prepare yourself.
- Use topical agents to numb the skin and minimise pain e.g EMLA cream.
- Distraction techniques such as listening to music, counting backwards, watching TV or playing video games.
- Visualisation/imagery techniques.
- Deep breathing exercises.
- Progressive muscle relaxation, such as tensing and relaxing different groups of muscles.
- Bring a family member or friend along for support.
- Medications can be used for severe anxiety. Discuss with a mental health professional.



Where to Seek Help

Procedural anxiety can be managed, and symptoms improved. Speak with your CF care team about your previous experiences and work together to create a plan around coping with procedures. A mental health professional can work with you to help you learn some of the techniques mentioned above.

You can also always call CFWA and speak with our Social Worker who can chat with you about your experiences and link you up with appropriate help.

Useful Resources

- [Procedural Anxiety](#) (CF Foundation)
- [Managing Procedural Anxiety](#) (CF Foundation)
- [How I Calm My Nerves Before Clinic](#) (CF Foundation)

Last reviewed September 2020.

Cystic Fibrosis WA
E: info@cfwa.org.au

Disclaimer: This publication is for general education and information purposes. Contact a qualified healthcare professional for any medical advice needed.
© Cystic Fibrosis Western Australia 2020.