

Exercise For Children with CF

Being active is important for everyone, with physical, social and mental health benefits, but for children with cystic fibrosis (CF) it has even more health benefits.

Benefits of Exercise

- Increased lung function
- Helps with physio by making it easier to clear mucus
- Small increases in body weight (especially with strength training)
- Improved balance and flexibility
- Increased muscle and bone strength
- Improved appetite
- Increased bone density

How Much and What Types of Exercise?

All children, with or without CF, should do 60 minutes of exercise a day including a wide variety of activities like running, jumping and ball games.

Toddlers

For toddlers, their 60 minutes of exercise would be broken up throughout the day. It should be fun and play based.

Children

Children should ideally be involved in exercise that leaves them out of breath, such as running, swimming, football or tennis, although there are a wide range of suitable activities.

They can also incorporate resistance exercises that use their body weight, like gymnastics or martial arts.



To keep up motivation in children you can try:

- Making it a social event. Take this chance to spend more time with your child and go on a family bike ride or play sports together.
- Try something different. One of the most common reasons why young people stop exercising is because it becomes boring. Encourage your child to try different kinds of activities so they find something they love.

Teenagers

By this age your child can introduce resistance training using weights as well. Managing flexibility around the ribs and shoulders is also important to preserve full movement in the joints and muscles around this area.

Motivation can be tricky, especially as children get older and enter adolescence. The most important thing is to find a sport or activity that they

love to do and can enjoy with friends. If a certain sport or exercise makes them happy, they're more likely to stick with it.

Coughing

Exercise may cause your child to cough, and this is normal in children with CF. Encourage your child to perform huffs during and especially after exercise as this will help clear more mucus and make their physio more effective.

If you are concerned about their coughing during exercise, talk with their CF care team. Sometimes children with CF can benefit from using an inhaler before or during exercise.

Exercising Safely

Exercise programs should always be discussed with your child's CF team. Some things to consider are:

Dehydration

To avoid dehydration, increase fluid intake before, during and after exercise. Ensure they always have a water bottle nearby during exercise. In hot weather, your child may also need to increase dietary salt, have a sports drink or take salt supplements. See [Dehydration](#) factsheet for more information.

Germs

Make sure shared equipment is clean and teach your child to wash their hands before and after sport. As always, encourage them to steer clear of people who may be visibly unwell.

CF Related Diabetes (CFRD)

Children with CFRD will need to monitor blood sugar levels during and after exercise. They may need to increase carbohydrate intake on the days they exercise and carry a short acting carbohydrate with them when they exercise in case they experience a drop in blood glucose levels. Speak with their

dietitian or doctor about their individual needs. See [CFRD](#) factsheet for more information.

Continence

Some children with CF have weakened pelvic floor muscles due to coughing and constipation and may experience incontinence with exercise. Speak with their CF physiotherapist who can offer advice and a referral to a continence advisor if required. See [Continence](#) factsheet for more information.

Nutrition

If your child struggles with weight gain, it's important to discuss their exercise regime with their CF care team to ensure their energy needs are being met. See [Nutrition for Children](#) factsheet for more information.

Education

CFWA can provide CF education to sports coaches, specific to your child. Contact our Education Coordinator education@cfwa.org.au to find out more

Sports Subsidies

CFWA offer an [Activity Subsidy](#) for children up to 16 years of age to help toward costs of community sport or physical activity of your choice.

Useful Resources

- [CFFit Exercise Resources](#) (CFWA)
- [Exercise & Sport in School Factsheet](#) (CFWA)
- [Fitness at School](#) (CF Foundation)

Last reviewed October 2020.

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