

Exercise for Adults with CF

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

- Increased lung function
- More productive physio making it easier to clear mucus
- Preserved muscle strength
- Improved chest mobility
- Increased body weight (especially with strength training)
- Improved bone density and posture
- Improved mental health and wellbeing

Getting Started

When starting a new exercise program it is important to speak with your CF physio who can provide guidance on suitable exercises and prescription including intensity, frequency and duration of training. A more formal program may be needed at times, such as during an exacerbation, pregnancy, decline in lung health or comorbidities that require close management.

Types of Exercise and their Benefits

Physical activity should occur at least three days a week, but preferably five or more, and include aspects of each of the following types of exercise:

Aerobic Training

Involves exercises that raise the heart



rate, through repetitive movement of large muscle groups, and can be either weight bearing (hiking) or non-weight bearing (swimming). This type of exercise is particularly beneficial as it helps to clear mucus from the airways. Regular aerobic training helps make everyday life easier, by improving overall endurance for carrying out day-to-day tasks.

Resistance Training

Increases the power and tone of muscle and builds bone density. It can be done using free weights, your own body weight or elastic resistance. It is particularly beneficial in increasing bone strength and preventing osteoporosis and fractures. It can also improve chest mobility and strength, which helps clear mucus.

Flexibility and Core Strengthening

Helps lengthen muscles and tendons and includes activities such as stretching,

yoga and pilates. Keeping the spine, ribcage and shoulders flexible assists with breathing and maintaining good posture, as well as helping preserve full movement of the joints and muscles around this area.

Exercise does not replace daily physio, rather, both should be used together. Exercising before, during or after exercise may help clear more mucus from your lungs. [Huffing](#) should be included when exercising to maximise the benefits of airway clearance.

Exercising Safely

Some things to consider with exercise are:

Weight Loss

Aerobic exercise burns more calories, so calorie intake may need to be adjusted to avoid weight loss.

Continence

Exercise puts more strain on pelvic floor muscles, so some exercises may need to be modified or avoided to ensure they are pelvic floor safe. See [Continence](#) factsheet for more information.

Oxygen

Some people may benefit from using oxygen during exercise as this can allow longer exercise at a higher intensity. The CF physio may recommend checking oxygen levels while exercising to make sure you are in the safe range.

Injuries

People with CF may be more prone to injuries if they have joint or bone issues. The CF physio can provide advice on this issue.

CF Related Diabetes (CFRD)

People with CFRD will need to monitor blood sugar levels during and after exercise. See [CFRD](#) factsheet for more information.

Dehydration

People with CF should increase intake of fluids before, during and after exercise. You may also need to increase dietary salt, have a sports drink or take salt supplements. See [Dehydration](#) factsheet for more information.

Germ

Make sure you disinfect shared equipment, such as gym machines and wash your hands regularly. As always, steer clear of others who may be visibly unwell.

Nutrition Considerations

Most people with CF have higher energy needs. Regular exercise can increase energy needs further, so it is important to discuss your training schedule with your CF dietitian too, so that a suitable diet can be planned to avoid weight loss, keep hydrated and aid recovery.

Sports Subsidy

CFWA's [Adult Support Subsidy](#) can help towards the costs of community sport or gym memberships.

Useful Resources

- [CFFit Exercise Resources \(CFWA\)](#)
- [Exercise \(CF Physio\)](#)
- [Fitness \(CF Foundation\)](#)
- [CFWA Factsheets](#)
- [Sports Nutrition and CF Factsheet \(NEMO\)](#)

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Cystic Fibrosis WA
The Niche
11 Aberdare Road
Nedlands WA 6009

T: +61 8 6224 4100
E: info@cfwa.org.au

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