

Exercise for Adults with CF

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

- Preserving lung function
- Assisting with airway clearance
- Preserving muscle strength
- Improving chest mobility
- Improving appetite and body weight
- Improving bone strength and posture

Getting started

Try to make it fun. Do exercise that you enjoy, exercise with a friend or family member or listen to music while you move.

Time and financial barriers can make prioritising exercise challenging for some. CFWA's [Adult Support Subsidy](#) can help towards the costs of community sport or gym memberships and our [Community Support Workers](#) can assist with exercise motivation at home.

How much should I do?

It is important to be active most days. Aim for 2.5 to 5 hours of moderate intensity physical activity a week or 1.5 to 2.5 hours of more intense physical activity each week. Your physio can provide guidance on suitable exercises and prescription including intensity, frequency and duration of training.

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.

Types of exercise and their benefits

There are different types of exercise and each can help in different ways. Try to include some of each of the different types of exercise in your weekly plan.

Aerobic Training

Involves exercises that raise the heart rate and make you breathe faster. Aerobic exercise can be performed at a low to moderate intensity such as swimming or bike riding, or at high intensity such as sprint running, or HIIT (high-intensity interval training).

This type of exercise is particularly beneficial in assisting with airway clearance and improving endurance for carrying out day-to-day tasks.

Resistance/Strength 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. Examples include jumping, climbing and weight training. It is particularly beneficial in increasing bone strength and preventing osteoporosis. Aim for muscle strengthening activities on at least 2 days each week.

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 considerations

More support with exercise may be needed at times from the CF team, such as during an exacerbation, pregnancy, decline in lung health or comorbidities that require close management. Be sure to maintain good communication with your CF team with any changes to your health. Some important considerations to highlight include:

Continence: Some exercises put more strain on the pelvic floor muscles, so may need to be modified or avoided to ensure they are pelvic floor safe. Check with your CF physio to see which exercises they recommend for you.

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

Infection prevention: Make sure you disinfect shared equipment, such as gym equipment and wash your hands regularly. As always, avoid 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 and physio to ensure you are eating a suitable diet to maintain a healthy weight. Salt and fluid are also important before, during and after exercise, particularly in summer. Dehydration can result in increased tiredness, heat exhaustion or other problems such as cramping.

Useful resources

- [Beam CF- Exercise at Home](#)
- [Sports Nutrition and CF Factsheet \(NEMO\)](#)
- [Exercise \(CF Physio\)](#)

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