

Summertime and CF

Summer brings excitement and anticipation for all that holiday fun, however, if you are living with or caring for someone with CF, it can also bring some challenges. Here are some tips to help you manage the warmer weather.

Dehydration

People with CF lose more salt in their sweat which increases the risk of dehydration during the summer months. Be prepared; ensure you have salt supplements and extra water or other fluids on hand. Speak to your CF team to ensure you or your child are getting the correct amount of salt for individual needs.

When exercising or being active in the hot and humid weather, dehydration can occur quite quickly. Don't wait until you or your child become thirsty; keep hydrated by taking regular water breaks. Also limit intake of caffeinated drinks like tea and coffee as these are diuretics and cause increased fluid loss.

Try to exercise in the shade and in the early morning or evening when the weather is cooler. After exercising it is important to rehydrate with water, sports drinks or choc milk. Choc milk contains approximately 85% water, proteins to help with muscle repair and simple sugars to replace energy stores.

Babies need extra fluids too. Infants get dehydrated more quickly than young children so keep them well hydrated and dressed in cool clothing. Ask your CF care team if supplements are needed for your baby during the summer months.



Sunscreen

Sunscreen is an important part of the daily routine, but particularly important during the summer months. Certain medications can also cause hyper sensitivity to the sun. Apply SPF 30+ (or higher) broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen and remember to reapply it every two hours and cover up.

Allergies

People with CF can have seasonal allergies just like everyone else. Allergies can exaggerate problems such as sneezing, congestion, or wheezing. Check in with your team about taking antihistamines to manage these allergies.

Nutrition

Loss of appetite is not uncommon in the hot weather so make sure snacks or supplement drinks are on hand which will help get those essential calories.

Medications

Many medications are temperature sensitive, so be mindful to keep all drugs at the recommended temperature. You may need to keep medications in a cooler bag if you are out and about. Enzymes should always be kept at room temperature, which is generally 15-30°C, so don't keep them in your car or in direct sunlight.

Swimming and water play

A big part of our Australian summer fun is enjoying time relaxing by the pool. If you or your child has CF there are a few things to consider.

Public pools in Australia adhere to strict regulations and surveillance to ensure the water quality is of a standard to protect public health. Private pools and spas however, are not under such scrutiny. Ensure they are disinfected as per recommendations and that there is adequate filtration in place to minimise the risk of bacterial growth.

Paddling pools are generally fine, as long as they are filled with fresh water with each use and emptied and allowed to dry before being used again. At water parks there is a risk that splashed or misted water could be inhaled. However, as long as there is strict adherence to disinfecting/chlorinating the water to industry standards, this should be quite safe. Washing after swimming is advisable and inflatable toys should be thoroughly dried out after use.

Remember that many water play toys have holes in them, and these can contain stagnant water and mould. It is best to choose water toys that are sealed.

Travel

If you are heading overseas for the summer holidays, ensure you or your CF child has a full health check with the CF team before travelling. You should also obtain prescriptions for medications you will need while away, get letters explaining diagnosis and the medications required, including those nebulised. Make sure you have all the required medications you will need as some countries may not stock particular medications. Ensure you or your child with CF is up to date with routine immunisations. Additional travel vaccines may be recommended. Talk with your CF team about your travel plans.

Bushfires

During the summer months there is a higher risk of smoke in the air due to bushfires. This can be troublesome for anyone with respiratory problems including those with CF. It is advisable in these conditions to stay indoors with the doors and windows shut, stay in airconditioned premises and avoid vigorous exercise. If you are particularly susceptible to the bushfire smoke, consider staying with friends or family who live away from the smoky environment. If you also have asthma, follow your Asthma Action Plan and carry your relieving medication with you.