

## Cepacia

*Burkholderia cepacia* complex (*B. cepacia*) are a group of bacteria that are found in soil and water and pose a health risk to people with CF. Individuals with CF are more vulnerable to these bacteria due to the thick, sticky mucus that accumulates in their lungs, creating an environment where germs such as *B. cepacia* can thrive and multiply.

People with CF are each affected differently by *B. cepacia* complex. Some may experience a decline in lung function and worsening CF symptoms, whereas others may not have any obvious changes.

### How it spreads

*B. cepacia* can be through exposure from dirty water or soil, contact with contaminated surfaces or equipment or by person-to-person transmission. Infection control measures and precautions can be effective in reducing the risk of being infected with *B. cepacia* and preventing spread to others.

### Prevention

In the environment, *B. cepacia* lives predominantly in wet and damp places.

To reduce transmission from the environment it is recommended to:

- Limit exposure/wear a mask if cleaning out pet litter, stables, fish tanks or when handling garden mulch and soils.
- Keep bathrooms as dry as possible, leave window open to reduce humidity.
- Avoid water/bath toys with holes that trap water inside.
- Service air conditioning units annually.



To reduce the risk of transmission from equipment or surfaces in hospitals or other environments where there is increased risk, it is recommended to:

- Practice good hand hygiene before and after touching equipment or surfaces.
- Regularly clean frequently touched equipment or surfaces.
- Avoid sharing equipment between people with CF.

To reduce the person-to-person transmission risk, it is recommended people with CF:

- Avoid close or prolonged contact with each other and endeavour to maintain a distance of 4m apart, particularly in small, enclosed spaces (does not include people living in the same house).
- Practice good hand hygiene- regular hand washing or use of alcohol-based hand sanitiser, particularly in hospital environments.

## Treatment

*B. cepacia* is resistant to many antibiotics, making it difficult to treat, however some antibiotics will work for a period of time. Some species develop a strong outer cell wall making it more difficult for antibiotics to penetrate and do their job.

Research is currently underway to find new ways of treating resistant infections in those with CF.

## Useful resources

- [Burkholderia Cepacia Complex](#) (CF Foundation)
- [Common Bugs](#) (CFPhysio)
- [CFWA Factsheets](#)