

Cystic Fibrosis in the Workplace



People with cystic fibrosis (CF) work in diverse areas of employment and are fully capable of independently managing their health in a workplace setting. A supportive, understanding employer can be extremely helpful for someone living with CF.

What is CF?

CF is one of the most common genetic diseases affecting people in Australia. The impact of CF varies from person to person, with differing degrees of severity. Approximately 1 in 25 Australians are carriers of the CF gene; however, a person must inherit two copies of the gene to be diagnosed with the condition. CF is not contagious and does not affect a person's cognitive ability.

Although many individuals with CF may not display any symptoms, some may experience certain health issues when unwell. Common symptoms can include persistent coughing, which is not contagious, recurrent lung and sinus infections, and digestive system problems.

Management of CF

Most CF management occurs outside of the workplace, including daily physiotherapy to clear the lungs and many medications. However, hospital appointments and admissions may be required at times to maintain optimal health.

Infection Prevention

For people with CF, some bacteria and viruses can cause major lung infections, resulting in hospital admissions and permanent lung damage. Part of everyday life for a person with CF involves reducing the risk of catching an infection, through good hand hygiene practices, avoiding people who are unwell and taking care in certain environments where CF infections are more prevalent.

How can we support people with CF in the workplace?

It's important to provide a space to have open, honest communication. It may be helpful to have a discussion around flexibility to work from home where needed or for attending hospital appointments.

Encouraging all staff to maintain good hand hygiene and stay home when unwell would also be very helpful.

Disclosure in the workplace

Disclosure of CF in the workplace is a personal decision; some individuals may prefer to keep their diagnosis private or only to share with a small number of colleagues. Letting people know about CF can help with conversations around flexibility and infection risks. Each person will manage this differently and can access support from CFWA to talk to their workplace if needed.

More Information

Cystic Fibrosis WA are available to provide support and advice. Contact our Services team on **08 6224 4100** or **services@cfwa.org.au**. You can also check out our resources on our website www.cfwf.org.au.

Useful Resources

- [About CF](#) (CFWA)
- [Information for Employers](#) (CFStrong)