

An active lifestyle is extremely important for the CF population, benefits include increased pulmonary function and overall quality of life. People with CF who exercise and keep fit are shown to cope better with the impact of CF, have fewer infections and generally have healthier lives.

Exercise can also:

- Improve daily functioning
- Preserve muscle strength and function
- Slow the rate of decline in lung function
- Increase body mass
- Assist with airway clearance by helping to clear mucus from the lungs
- Improve appetite
- Improve the ability to perform Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) such as cleaning and shopping etc.
- Improve exercise tolerance
- Increase bone density
- Improve posture
- Improve sleep

The benefits are not only physical, with improvements often seen in self-esteem and emotional wellbeing as well as decreased anxiety and depression, all of which affect adherence with treatments.

Types of exercise

Aerobic training

Aerobic training are exercises that raise your heart rate through repetitive movement of large muscle groups and can be either weight bearing (walking or hiking) or non-weight bearing (biking or swimming).

It is particularly beneficial as the movements involved, such as vibrations in running, often help to clear secretions from the airways. Regular aerobic training helps make everyday life easier, by improving overall endurance for carrying out day to day tasks.

Resistance training

Resistance training increases the power and tone of muscles and builds bone density. It can be done using free weights, your own body weight (plyometrics) or with elastic resistance.

Many people with CF have low bone mineral density, predisposing them to fractures. Weight training is particularly beneficial in increasing bone strength and preventing fractures and osteoporosis.

It can also be beneficial in increasing chest mobility and strength, which aids in the removal of mucus from the airways, as well as making everyday tasks easier.

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Flexibility and core strengthening

Flexibility and core strengthening exercises help to lengthen muscles and tendons and improve or maintain the flexibility of muscles and can include stretching, yoga and pilates.

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

Exercise does not replace your usual airway clearance, but rather they should be used in conjunction with one another. Huffing and coughing should be included when exercising to maximise airway clearance benefits.

Useful resource:

CFfit www.cysticfibrosis.org.au/wa/cffit

Disclaimer: The information contained herein is provided in good faith. However accuracy of any statements is not guaranteed by Cystic Fibrosis Australia. We provide the information on the understanding that persons take responsibility for assessing relevance and accuracy. Individuals are encouraged to discuss their health needs with a health practitioner.

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