

Cystic Fibrosis Trust

CF Information Sheet

How does CF affect the body?

Closely read the information contained in the boxes on this sheet. Then label your diagram of a figure and describe how cystic fibrosis can affect various parts of the body.

Living with cystic fibrosis can have great impact on a person's mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Many people with cystic fibrosis suffer from nasal polyps. These are soft swellings that grow in the nose or sinuses and can cause pain, a runny nose or the loss of the sense of smell.

Everybody has a thin layer of mucus on the airways inside their lungs. This helps to catch dust or bacteria that has been breathed in. People with cystic fibrosis have much thicker mucus meaning bacteria can become trapped and cause infections.

It is common for people with cystic fibrosis to have issues with the way their liver functions. The bile the liver produces can become sticky and cause inflammation which can damage and affect the functioning of the liver. In some cases, a liver transplant may be required.

Sinusitis, which is the blocking of the three pairs of airfield spaces in the head with mucus, is commonly experienced by people with cystic fibrosis.

The thinning and weakening of the bones that we all experience as we grow older can occur earlier to people with cystic fibrosis. This can mean they are more susceptible to fractures.

The pancreas creates important chemicals called enzymes that break down your food. In people with cystic fibrosis, the tubes that transport these enzymes become blocked with mucus. This causes the enzymes to build up inside the pancreas and lead to it becoming inflamed.

For reasons that are unknown, some people with cystic fibrosis and other lung conditions can experience something called clubbing. This involves the ends of the fingers to swell and become rounder in shape.

The onset of puberty can be delayed by around 18 months to two years for people with cystic fibrosis. Young people with cystic fibrosis go on to develop the physical appearance of a healthy adult.

Around 98% of men with cystic fibrosis will not be able to father a child without the assistance of fertility experts. This is because the tube that carries the sperm from the testicles to the penis is either missing or blocked. Assisted reproductive methods mean many men with CF are able to become fathers despite these challenges.

Cystic fibrosis can affect fertility in women and men. Women with CF are more likely to miss periods during times of illness meaning they do not produce an egg for fertilisation. With improved treatments, more women with CF are now having babies, but they may need extra support from their healthcare teams to ensure they stay well during pregnancy.