

# Cystic fibrosis: Infection prevention & control

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is CF? / How do people get CF?**

Cystic fibrosis (CF) is the most common, genetically acquired, life-shortening chronic illness. CF affects a number of organs in the body (especially the lungs and pancreas) by clogging them with thick, sticky mucus. This leads to several complications, including frequent infections of the lungs. Complications increase with age, requiring ever increasing levels of care and support. Improved treatment means most people with CF are able to lead reasonably normal and productive lives. CF is thought to be rare in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island populations.

### **How do healthcare facilities prevent the spread of germs that affect people with CF?**

The general principles for the care of CF patients include adhering to the best available practice to prevent acquiring infections from the healthcare environment. Recommendations emphasise hand hygiene, containment of mucus, appropriate use of personal protective equipment such as gowns and gloves, cleaning and disinfection of reusable medical equipment and the environment.

### **What happens if I have an infection?**

If you have an infection you will be prescribed appropriate treatment by your doctor. You should always take all medications as prescribed and report any potential side effects to your doctor.

### **Can CF patients have visitors?**

Yes, visitors are allowed. However, some high-risk units in hospitals may require visitors to wear gowns and gloves.

### **How can I prevent the spread of germs that affect CF patients?**

The Cystic Fibrosis Australia guidelines advise people with CF who are in hospital or at home to undertake the following measures to minimise the risk of spread of respiratory pathogens.

- > Regularly wash your hands with soap and water, or use a waterless antiseptic hand rub: before eating, after coughing or handling sputum or tissues, and when using bathroom facilities.
- > Always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue (or use your elbow) when you sneeze or cough; throw used tissues away immediately after use and wash your hands.
- > Avoid touching any wounds or devices such as catheters or drips, however, if performing self-care, always wash and disinfect your hands first.
- > Keep your home surfaces clean, especially frequent hand touch areas in bathrooms and kitchens.



- > Avoid socialising with other persons with CF, but if unavoidable:
  - o sit or stand a reasonable distance (two metres) from each other
  - o try not to shake hands with each other, a light tap on shoulder, for example, is better
  - o do not share eating or drinking utensils with each other including drink cans, cup or bottles.
- > Do not share toothbrushes or towels with anyone.
- > All eating utensils, dishes, clothing and linen can be washed as normal.

### **How do I care for my equipment at home e.g. nebuliser or airway clearance devices?**

It is important that your equipment is kept clean. Always follow the directions given to you by the hospital and the manufacturer's instructions for use.

### **Where can I find more information on CF?**

If you would like more information or have concerns that you need to talk to someone about, please speak to your CF Care Team, your treating doctor or the Infection Control Unit at your local health service.

Also, see the Cystic Fibrosis Australia web site for additional patient resources. Available at: [http://www.cysticfibrosis.org.au/all/fact\\_sheets](http://www.cysticfibrosis.org.au/all/fact_sheets).

### **Other useful resources:**

[SA Health Consumer Information: Infection Prevention and You \(whilst in hospital\)](#)

[SA Health Consumer Information: Infection Prevention and You \(whilst in the community\)](#)

[Wash, Wipe Cover – don't infect another! \(resources\)](#)

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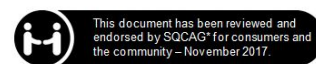
## For more information

**Infection Control Service  
Communicable Disease Control Branch  
11 Hindmarsh Square  
Adelaide SA 5000  
Telephone: 1300 232 272  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/hospitalinfections](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/hospitalinfections)**

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