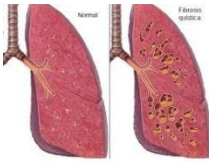
What is cystic fibrosis?



Cystic fibrosis is a condition that affects the lungs, digestive system, and other organs for life, it is a genetic disease. Mucus, tears, sweat, and saliva become so thick and sticky that they clog the lungs and digestive tract. Cystic fibrosis usually causes problems with breathing, with the digestion and absorption of food.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Drumstick-shaped fingers on the hands or feet
- Frequent coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath
- Weakness and fatigue
- Abdominal pain
- The person could suffer from frequent respiratory infections, such as sinusitis, bronchitis, or pneumonia

Diagnosis

Your doctor will ask if you have a family history of the condition and what symptoms it presents. Genetic counseling may be recommended to find out the cause. You may need any of the following tests:

- A **sweat chloride test** measures the amount of chloride in your sweat. This number will be high if you have cystic fibrosis.

- **Blood tests** to look for signs of an infection and to check how well the kidneys are working. They may also detect the gene that causes cystic fibrosis.

- An **X-ray** will show if your lungs are swollen or enlarged. It will also show if your airways are blocked and if fluid has built up.

• A **bronchoscopy** is a procedure to look inside your lungs to look for damage. A bronchoscope (a thin tube with a light on the end) through the mouth and into the lungs through the throat. Tissue and fluid samples may be taken from the airways and lungs for analysis.

How is cystic fibrosis treated?

There is no cure for cystic fibrosis. Treatment can help prevent respiratory or intestinal infections. It may also help you absorb nutrients.

Medicines

- **Antibiotics** to help fight or prevent you from getting an infection caused by bacteria.
- **Mucus thinning medications** should be inhaled to help thin the mucus in the lungs.
- **Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs** help reduce inflammation and pain. This medicine can be bought with or without a prescription.
- **Steroids** help reduce inflammation.
- Bronchodilators help open the air passages in the lungs.
- **Pancreatic enzymes** help the digestive system to digest food and absorb nutrients properly.
- **Oxygen,** if the oxygen level in the blood is lower than it should be.
- **Surgery** if organs, such as the liver or lungs, are severely damaged.

What to do to breathe easier?

- **Airway cleansing techniques** are exercises to help clear mucus, making it easier to breathe. Your doctor will teach you how to do the exercises.
- **Keeping your head elevated** when sleeping will help keep your airways open.
- **Cold mist humidifier** to make the air in the home environment more humid. This may help you breathe and cough up mucus.
- **Do not smoke**. If you smoke, it is never too late to quit. Coughing and breathing may be made worse by smoking.

How to stay healthy?

- Receiving recommended **vaccinations**
- Avoiding the spread of germs. **Covering the mouth** when coughing. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
- **Eating a variety of healthy foods.** Fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads, low-fat dairy products, lean meats, and fish are some healthy foods. Ask your doctor if you should be on a special diet.

• **Physical activity** can help loosen secretions from the airways and lungs, making it easier to breathe.

When to contact the doctor?

• If you have a fever, chills.
• If you feel weak or sore.
• If you have trouble sleeping.
• If you urinate less, you have a dry mouth, chapped lips.

Social and Emotional Aspect

For tips, tools, and resources on how you and your family can deal with the emotional and physical concerns that arise during and after your medical treatment, please visit your primary care physician or contact the following phone lines:

Medical Advice Line
1-844-347-7801
TYY-1-844-347-7804

References: Cystic Fibrosis. Retrieved from: https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/diseases-conditions/cystic-fibrosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20353700, 2021/11/03

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