

Cystic Fibrosis

Cystic Fibrosis (CF) is a genetic disorder that affects the glands which produce body fluids such as sweat, mucus and enzymes. This means that the lungs and digestive system can be severely affected.

A person with CF is born with the disorder. Life expectancy for people with CF is always improving. More than 50 per cent live beyond the age of 30 years. CF responds to intensive therapy to combat the symptoms, and is predominantly an outpatient-based model of care focused on encouraging people with CF and their families to live full and active lives. Some people with CF receive lung transplants.

One in every 2500 Australian births is a baby with CF. Approximately 3000 Australians have CF, 600 in Victoria. A person with CF needs to have inherited a CF gene from each of their parents. With every pregnancy between two parent carriers there is a one in four chance that a child will have CF, and a two in four chance of being a carrier of CF. There are approximately 750,000 carriers of the CF gene in Australia.

A person with CF primarily has health problems resulting from the production of thick and sticky mucus that affects the airways, lungs and digestion:

- The thick mucus blocks the airways and creates a breeding ground for bacteria
- Resulting infections can lead to lung damage
- People with CF need physiotherapy to clear the airways of mucus so that breathing is easier and lung infections prevented.

The thick mucus prevents digestion of food by blocking ducts in the pancreas that release enzymes needed to breakdown food. This can result in malnutrition and stomach pain. People with CF take enzyme replacement tablets every day to digest their food.

RDNS has a team, including two nurses and one physiotherapist, expert in CF care. They work with clients and their families on an individual basis and alongside our general nursing staff as needed.

RDNS services include:

- Working collaboratively with CF hospital teams to provide CF clients and their families with specialist, holistic health care in both the hospital and community
- Assisting with home intravenous therapy
- Providing nursing care and physiotherapy after transplant operations when required
- Providing cystic fibrosis education for families, carers, schools, community groups and other health

For more information please call 1300 33 44 55.