

NIH Clinical Center Patient Education Materials

Cystic Fibrosis (CF)

What is Cystic Fibrosis?

Cystic fibrosis (CF) is an inherited disease that primarily affects the lungs and digestive tract. Cystic fibrosis can cause mucus to build up and clog the airways of the lungs. These buildups create mucus plugs that can cause germs to get stuck in the lungs, leading to infection or colonization. Colonization occurs when germs are found in your lungs but are not causing infection. Germs such as *Pseudomonas* and *Burkholderia* can cause lung infections. Sometimes, these infections may be hard to treat.

Can people who have CF spread germs to others?

People who have CF do not typically spread germs to healthy people. However, people who have CF can spread germs easily to others who have CF. Germs can spread through respiratory droplets that come from the nose or mouth or by touching contaminated door knobs, linens, medical equipment, and other objects in the environment. Germs on objects in the environment can be removed by cleaning with a disinfectant. Make sure to wear a mask when you are outside of your room, wash your hands frequently, and keep a distance of 6 feet between you and other patients who have CF to reduce the spread of germs. Hand hygiene is the most important way to prevent the spread of germs. Wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol hand rub often. Ask your care team and visitors to wash their hands frequently.

Important things to know

Read “Patient Information—Hand Hygiene” and “Patient Information—Contact Isolation.”

Isolation

- You will be on contact isolation at the hospital to prevent spreading germs to other patients who have CF.
- You must follow the directions given in the “Contact Isolation” and “Hand Hygiene” information sheets provided by your care team.
- You will be asked to wear a mask when outside of your room.
- Staff will wear a gown and gloves when they are in your room.
- All visitors must follow the directions given in the “Contact Isolation” and “Hand Hygiene” information sheets.
- Other patients may not visit you in the Clinical Center while you are on contact isolation.
- You will be on isolation indefinitely, both as an inpatient and an outpatient.
- Isolation does not determine the length of your hospital stay.

Questions?

Ask your nurse or doctor, or call the Hospital Epidemiology Service at 301-496-2209.

For more information visit the NIH Clinical Center’s Patient Portal:

<https://patientportal.cc.nih.gov/SPP/Anonymous/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fSPP>

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Questions about the NIH Clinical Center?

<http://www.cc.nih.gov/comments.shtml>

