

JOURNALIST FACTSHEET

PHYSIOTHERAPY

One of the most important parts of the management of Cystic Fibrosis (CF) is physical treatment. The main aim is to keep the lungs clear and to maintain physical fitness – and, if possible, to improve it.

Lungs which are affected by Cystic Fibrosis produce mucus which contains less water than it should and is stickier. With healthy lungs, mucus moves naturally to the throat, where it can be coughed up or swallowed. Lungs affected by CF can't do this properly, which means that nature's way of keeping lungs 'clean' is less efficient. Bacteria can build up and the lungs are more vulnerable to infection. The aim of physiotherapy is to try to prevent the sticky lung secretions building up in the small air tubes. This helps to reduce infection and prevent, or at least delay lung damage.

Parents are taught physiotherapy techniques and the importance of physical exercise for their child by the physiotherapist in the CF clinic. From around the age of nine, most children can start doing part of their physiotherapy for themselves. Most teenagers become completely independent and administer their own physiotherapy. As children and teenagers with CF are often in much better health than they would have been years ago, they are encouraged to take exercise and participate in sport, which can be regarded as physiotherapy in itself.

The length of treatment sessions should vary according to need. Most people with CF have a set routine when they are well but increase the amount of physio when they're coughing more than usual or when there are signs of active infection. Most patients do two sessions of physiotherapy a day lasting 10-15 minutes when they are well. This could rise to 3-4 per day lasting 45-60 minutes.

There are a variety of physiotherapy techniques including gravity assisted positioning, breathing control exercises, thoracic expansions (deep breathing exercises), forced expiration technique (huffing & breathing control), chest clapping and chest shaking, and of course, physical exercise and participation in sporting activities where possible.

More details on specific techniques are available on request.

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For all media inquiries please contact:

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Notes to Editors

- The Cystic Fibrosis Trust is the UK's only national charity dealing with all aspects of Cystic Fibrosis (CF). It funds research to treat and cure CF and aims to ensure appropriate clinical care and support for people with Cystic Fibrosis.
- Cystic Fibrosis (CF) is one of the UK's most common life-threatening inherited diseases. Cystic Fibrosis is caused by a single defective gene. As a result, the internal organs, especially the lungs and digestive system, become clogged with thick sticky mucus resulting in chronic infections and inflammation in the lungs and difficulty digesting food.
- Each week five babies are born with Cystic Fibrosis and three young people die – 90% from lung damage. Around half of the CF population can expect to live over 38 years, although improvements in treatments mean a baby born today is expected to live even longer.
- Further information can be found on our website www.cftrust.org.uk. Help and advice for those affected by Cystic Fibrosis is available through our Helpline on 0300 373 1000. For further information, media should contact Gemma Foy on 0208 290 7912 or email gfoy@cftrust.org.uk



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