Cystic Fibrosis
General Overview

Q. What is CF?

A. Cystic fibrosis (CF) is a treatable disorder that affects the body's control of salt levels. It causes thick, sticky mucus to build up in the lungs and digestive system and other organs.

Q. What does it mean if my baby has an abnormal CF screen?

A. It means that further testing is needed because your baby might have CF. Only about 1 in 3 babies with abnormal newborn screening results in Washington State will actually have CF. However, it's important to find out soon because a baby who has CF will do much better if treatment begins early.

Q. How do I find out if my baby has CF?

A. Another test, called a "sweat test", is needed to find out if your baby has CF. Performing this painless test on babies requires very special capability that is only available at Cystic Fibrosis Foundation accredited care centers. There are centers in Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane, and Portland, Oregon. Your health care provider can arrange for the testing at the center closest to you.

Q. When can my baby have the sweat test?

A. The sweat test is most reliable when the baby is two weeks of age or older, although it may be done earlier. Some babies will have inconclusive results and need to have additional testing.

Q. What are the effects of having CF?

A. CF causes thick, sticky mucus to build up in the lungs and digestive system and other organs of the body. This can lead to respiratory and digestive problems that can be very serious. Early detection and treatment is especially helpful to improve the digestive problems, growth and development.

Q. What is the treatment for CF?

A. Treatments will vary depending on the baby, but will typically include special medicine to help the baby's digestion, a high-calorie, high-protein diet and special chest therapy. The best medical care for babies with CF is at care centers that are accredited by the national Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Q. Why would a baby have CF?

A. Cystic fibrosis is an inherited disorder. It results when a baby receives a non-working CF gene from each parent. You can get more information about this from your health care provider or through the cystic fibrosis care center where the sweat test is done.

Q. How common is CF?

A. About one in every 3,500 babies in the United States is born with cystic fibrosis.

For more information about cystic fibrosis, please see the Disorders section of our website: www.doh.wa.gov/nbs.

Washington State Department of Health • Newborn Screening Program
1610 NE 150th Street, K17-9 • Shoreline, WA 98155-0729 • www.doh.wa.gov/nbs
Phone: (206) 418-5410 • FAX: (206) 418-5415 • E-mail: NBS.Prog@doh.wa.gov

Revised: 03/06