

Cystic Fibrosis Related Diabetes

What is Cystic Fibrosis Related Diabetes (CFRD)?

CFRD means that the body has stopped being able to control the level of sugar in the blood. This is because the gland behind the stomach, called the pancreas, becomes unable to make enough of the hormone insulin, which enables the body to use sugar. This high sugar level then if left untreated can cause long term complications such as poor body weight, recurrent chest infections and kidney damage.

How common is it ?

The chance of developing CFRD increases with age. It occurs in approximately 30% of people with CF by the age of 25. As well as those with CFRD some people with CF have 'impaired glucose tolerance which means they can get high blood sugar levels when consuming lots of sugary foods and/or drinks.

How is it treated?

If you are shown to have an abnormal result after an Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT) or on routine blood tests you will be asked to complete a food and blood sugar diary if this shows that blood sugar levels are regularly raised above that of normal then you are likely to be started on insulin, and education is also given regarding any dietary changes necessary.

Is CFRD the same as ordinary diabetes?

CFRD is different from the usual form of diabetes , it is treated and managed differently, particularly in relation to your diet. The usual form of diabetes is managed with a diet low in fat and sugar and high in fibre. This is not advised in people with CF as this is low in calories. If you have CFRD you should continue to eat foods that are high in fat and sugar and not follow other diabetic dietary guidelines.

How will I know if I am developing CFRD?

Some people will only become aware of becoming diabetic when they have routine blood tests however others develop symptoms which indicate the condition , these can be :

- Unexplained weight Loss
- Excessive Thirst
- Passing urine frequently
- Feeling tired

Information for Patients

How long does diabetes last?

For most people with CF it is a permanent condition . Occasionally however diabetes can develop for short periods when unwell or on a course of steroids. Some people just require insulin treatment for these periods.

What about diet?

Because it is so important for people with CF to consume a high calorie diet there are very few changes required once a diagnosis of CFRD has been made. It is important that you have regular meals and snacks with starchy food at each meal , such as bread/potatoes/breakfast cereals/pasta/rice. It is extremely important that Sugary drinks and sweets are replaced with low sugar alternatives ie diet drinks and savoury snacks or chocolate. All foods containing carbohydrate have an effect on blood glucose levels so advice will be given on choosing carbohydrates and you may be given information on the effects of fat and protein to help with blood sugar control whilst maintaining a high calorie intake.

Contact us :

This information was produced by CF Dieticians, West Midlands Adult CF Centre, Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this information, please contact one of our CF dieticians on 0121 424 1796 (direct line with answerphone) or 0121 424 2000 bleep 2425 or email joanne.barrett@heartofengland.nhs.uk, toni.osborne@heartofengland.nhs.uk elizabeth.glennon@heartofengland.nhs.uk, rebecca.jones@heartofengland.nhs.uk

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If you are concerned about any of the information in this leaflet or have any further queries please speak to your consultant or the CF team.

Additional information

For more information on all aspects of living with Cystic Fibrosis you can visit the Cystic Fibrosis Trust web site at : www.cftrust.org.uk.

For local news and events the West Midlands Regional Cystic Fibrosis Unit based at Heartland Hospital has its own website at: www.heartlandscf.org.uk .

Please use the space below to write down any questions you may want to ask: