The University of Chicago Cystic Fibrosis Care Center

5841 S. Maryland Ave., MC 4064, Chicago, Illinois 60637
Toll Free: (888) UCH 0200 □ (888) 824 0200
For appointments call: (773) 702 6178 □ FAX: (773) 834 1444
http://www.uchicagokidshospital.org/specialties/cystic-fibrosis/

My Baby is a CF Carrier? What does that mean?

Your newborn baby was tested for a condition called Cystic Fibrosis (CF) while in the hospital. CF causes breathing and digestive problems. Babies who test positive for CF must have a follow up sweat test to see if they have this condition. This test is the best way of checking for CF. *Most babies who get a sweat test do not have CF*.

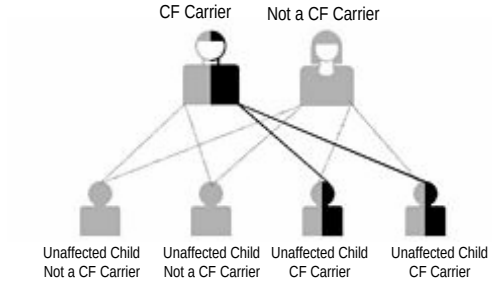
Some newborns who test positive for CF are CF carriers. CF carriers do not have cystic fibrosis. CF carriers do not need special medical care. But if your baby is a CF carrier, then either you or your partner is a CF carrier, too. It may be that both you and your partner are CF carriers, and you could have a baby with CF in the future. This brochure explains what it means to be a CF carrier.

What is a carrier?

Our bodies are made up of tiny building blocks called cells. Inside the cells are thousands of instructions called genes. Genes tell the body how to grow and develop. Some genes determine what we look like (hair color, eye color, etc.). Each gene comes in a set of two. One copy of a gene in each pair comes from our mother's egg. One copy comes from our father's sperm. We all have "mistakes" (called mutations) in a few of our genes. When one copy of a gene has a mutation in it, the other copy is usually working fine. A carrier is a healthy person with a gene that is not working because of a mutation. If both parents have mutations in the same gene, then their baby could be born with a health problem.

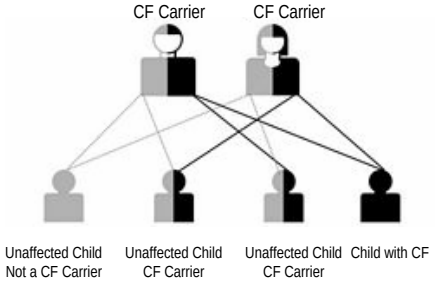
What is a CF Carrier?

A CF carrier has one working copy of the "CF gene." The other copy has a mutation in it. The CF gene affects how salt moves through our cells. A CF carrier does not have cystic fibrosis, because one CF gene is still working fine.



How does a person get CF?

A person has cystic fibrosis when both copies of the CF gene have mutations in them. When a mother and father are both CF carriers, each of their pregnancies has a 1 in 4 chance for the baby to have cystic fibrosis.



How can I find out if I am a CF carrier?

A blood test for you and your partner can tell which parent is a CF carrier like the baby, or if both parents are CF carriers. This blood test can tell more about your chances to have children with CF in the future. Your health care provider may order the test and discuss the results. A genetic counselor can help you learn more about CF carrier testing and arrange for you to be tested. The CF Care Center where the baby was sweat tested may also offer CF carrier testing.

When your child grows up, he or she should be told about the CF carrier test results. Someday his or her partner may decide to have a CF carrier test as well.

Any blood relative (brother, sister, aunt, uncle, cousin, etc.) of a CF carrier might also be a CF carrier. Learning about the baby's CF carrier test results may help family members decide about CF testing too.

Adapted with permission from the Wadsworth Center, State of New York Department of Health.