Cystic Fibrosis and CFTR-Related Disorders

Cystic fibrosis (CF) is the most common autosomal recessive disorder among Caucasians of Northern European descent, but can be found in all ethnic groups with varying frequency. CF is characterized by production of thick mucous that clogs respiratory airways. The mucous provides a breeding ground for infections and subsequent damage of lung tissue, which can result in respiratory failure. The mucous may cause intestinal obstructions, block pancreatic and bile ducts and interfere with liver function. Milder forms of CF have also been described in which not all defining features are present or age of onset is delayed.

CFTR-related disorders refer to a group of diseases that are associated with CF mutations but do not meet diagnostic criteria for CF. Congenital absence of the vas deferens (CAVD) is the most well-characterized of these disorders, where 80% of affected individuals are found to have CF mutations. CAVD accounts for 1-5% of male infertility. Individuals with pancreatitis, recurrent sinusitis or bronchitis also demonstrate a greater frequency of mutations in the CF gene than the general population.

Gene Mutations

CF is caused by mutations in the CFTR gene located on chromosome 7 (7q31.2) (see common CF mutations table). DeltaF508 is the most common mutation, and is associated with about 70% of CF cases in Caucasians of Northern European descent. Other CFTR mutations are less common, but may be more prevalent in certain ethnic groups. To be affected with CF, an individual must have two mutations in the CFTR gene.

The intron 8 poly T-tract adjacent to the CFTR exon 9 splicing acceptor site contains 5, 7 or 9 thymidine bases, which vary among individuals. The 7T and 9T tracts are considered to be benign. The 5T allele alone has not been reported to cause classical CF, but may increase the severity of other mutations depending if they are on the same (cis) or opposite (trans) CFTR mutation allele. The 5T variant is thought to decrease intron 8 splicing resulting in loss of exon 9. This results in reduced function of the CFTR protein.

Who Should be Tested?

- Individuals clinically suspected of being affected with cystic fibrosis or CF-related conditions
- Individuals with a family history of CF and their reproductive partners to determine carrier status
- Pregnancies at risk due to family history of CF
- Parents of a fetus with echogenic bowel detected by ultrasound
- Infants with meconium ileus who are too young to produce enough sweat

Potential Outcomes & Interpretation of Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CFTR Gene Mutations</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None detected</td>
<td>This result does not support a diagnosis of cystic fibrosis, or this individual is unlikely to be a carrier of cystic fibrosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One detected</td>
<td>This result is unable to confirm a diagnosis of cystic fibrosis, or this individual is a carrier of cystic fibrosis and may pass the mutation to offspring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two detected</td>
<td>This result confirms a diagnosis of cystic fibrosis</td>
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</tbody>
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For More Information


Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation [http://www.cff.ca]

To locate a genetics centre near you, please visit the Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors website at [www.cagc.ca] or the National Society of Genetic Counsellors website at [www.nsgc.org]

1. Current molecular testing may not detect all possible mutations for this disease. A negative test does not rule out the possibility that the individual carries a rare CF mutation not included in this assay.
2. Detection rates vary significantly between ethnic groups. The common mutations tested for account for more than 90% of those in North American Caucasians and ~95% in the Ashkenazi Jewish population.
3. The clinical course or severity of symptoms cannot be predicted by molecular analysis.
4. Test results should be interpreted in the context of clinical findings, family history and other laboratory data.
5. This test was developed and its performance characteristics validated by the Molecular Genetics Laboratory at the Hospital for Sick Children. It has not been cleared or approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The FDA has determined that such clearance or approval is not necessary. This test is used for clinical purposes.