

Tackling cystic fibrosis

Western Force hooker Nathan Charles, 23, is the only professional rugby player in the world with the life-threatening condition, cystic fibrosis. Not expected to live past the age of 10, Nathan is pushing for selection in his dream team – the Wallabies. **By Rashida Tayabali**

● **How much does cystic fibrosis [CF] affect your playing or training?**

I'm proud to say it's never affected my training or performances. I do my best to maintain optimum health by taking vitamins and medications regularly and visiting doctors and clinics as much as I have to.

● **What do you have to do daily to manage your illness?**

It's just about being aware of how I'm feeling when I wake up. I have to take medication four times a day and vitamin supplements day and night. They help maintain my health while fighting the condition.

● **What's a typical day for you?**

It starts at 7.30am with breakfast and physical screenings followed by training. After that, I focus on recovery and flexibility followed by a lunch break, massage, maybe a nap and snack. I weight-train and work on my scrum and lineout in the afternoons. Late afternoon finds me in the recovery area winding down from the day's activities.

● **How much of a role does diet play?**

A big one, although my diet centres mainly around my training. Daily, I eat a lot of protein, including meat, protein shakes before and after weight training and before bed. Breakfast usually consists of cereal and toast, followed by a big lunch, an afternoon snack then steak and veggies or steak and salad for dinner.

● **What training session do you enjoy most?**

I like weight training, scrum and lineout work and improving on strategic areas of my game such as attack and defence. I'm lucky to have great coaches who all bring different training drills and skills. It helps me to develop my game overall.

● **Who is the best player you've played against?**

All Black Keven Mealamu, John Smit and Bismarck du Plessis of South Africa, and Ben McCalman, my teammate, are tough players.

● **What's your favourite part of being a professional rugby player?**

Playing the game for fun on the weekends with my mates. The week's training sets me up nicely for the weekend.



Nathan on the charge for the Force against the Melbourne Rebels.



● **Do you have a role model?**

I respect several athletes, such as Tiger Woods, Michael Schumacher, and my teammate David Pocock. It's more about taking little things from every person and making the best role for me.

● **What's the best advice you've ever been given?**

Believe you can do anything; the only thing stopping you is yourself.


● **"If I hadn't been a professional sportsman, I would have liked to have been a..."**

If I hadn't played rugby, I would have liked to have joined Cirque du Soleil.

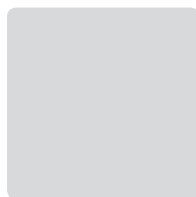
● **As an Ambassador for Cystic Fibrosis Australia how do you get involved with the organisation's activities?**

I use my presence and status in the professional rugby world to raise the profile of cystic fibrosis in Australia, getting signed merchandise and involving other athletes. I go to a lot of corporate days where I offer my feedback and advice to people affected directly or indirectly by CF.

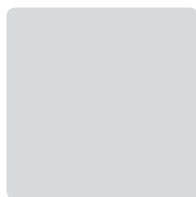
● **What are you looking forward to this year?**

Improving as a player and pushing for selection for the Wallabies. It's the team I'd love to play for. 

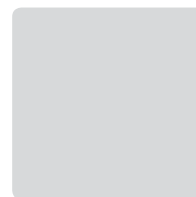
Treating cystic fibrosis



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When a person has CF their mucus glands secrete a thick, sticky mucus that clogs the tiny air passages in the lungs and traps bacteria. Repeated infections and blockages can cause irreversible lung damage. There are three common treatments for lung problems. **1. Antibiotics:** the primary treatment for CF, as most sufferers have ongoing, low-grade lung infections, which may require hospitalisation. **2. Chest physical therapy:** Also called chest clapping or percussion, this involves your chest and back being pounded repeatedly to dislodge mucus from the lungs so it can be coughed up. **3. Exercise:** Aerobic exercise may help to loosen the mucus, encourage coughing to clear it and improve your overall physical condition.