

The sweat test is the most common test used by healthcare providers to diagnose Cystic Fibrosis (CF). The test is painless.

Patient Preparation

No special preparation is necessary.

During the Test

The sweat-inducing drug pilocarpine is applied to a small area of the skin, usually on the forearm, and made to penetrate through the layers of skin and into the sweat glands by use of a small electric current and a pair of electrodes. The sweat-stimulation step takes approximately 5 minutes. Following the stimulation, a device is placed over the stimulated area for the collection of the sweat. The collection period may last 15 to 30 minutes. The collected sweat is then tested for sodium and/or chloride levels.

This test is frequently performed more than once either to confirm a positive result or because the result does not fit with the clinical findings. Your healthcare provider may order a repeat test.

After the Test

Discuss the results of the test with your healthcare provider.