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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**May 5, 2024**

**Make the most of Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month.**

*The GTCHD provides a program for residents who are diagnosed with CF*

The Grand Traverse County Health Department (GTCHD), in partnership with the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance, is observing May as Cystic Fibrosis (CF) Awareness Month. This year's theme is "Resilient," and we're urging residents to learn about the disease, share personal stories, and advocate for a cure.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), CF is a progressive, genetic disease that affects the lungs, pancreas, and other organs. People with the disease have mucus that is too thick and sticky which blocks airways leading to lung damage, traps germs leading to the likelihood of infections, and prevents protein absorption needed for digestion, which limits the body's ability to absorb nutrients. The [CF Foundation](#) said there are close to 40,000 children and adults living with CF in the country and it can affect people of every racial and ethnic group.

"Advances in treatment and therapy over the decades have allowed people with CF to live an improved quality of life," said GTCHD Medical Director Najibah Rehman, MD, MPH. "However, it can be isolating like any chronic disease, so having a large support system with family, friends, and care teams is essential for people, many of whom experience this disease incredibly early in life."

All babies born in the United States are checked for CF as part of a newborn screening. However, some people aren't diagnosed until adulthood. It's important to consult with their doctor. Signs and symptoms can include:

- Persistent coughing, at times with thick phlegm or blood
- Frequent lung or sinus infections
- Wheezing or shortness of breath
- Frequent greasy, bad-smelling stools or constipation
- Male infertility

The GTCHD provides a program named Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS) for children up to 26 years of age and some adults who have specific qualifying health conditions, including CF.

"Our teams at GTCHD do incredible work to provide compassionate, quality care to patients and their families, including resources and case management to further support any patient needs," said Dr. Rehman.

To join CSHCS, residents can ask a specialist to submit a medical report that includes a treatment plan and diagnosis. If people want to learn more about the program, please call the GTCHD at 231-995-6130 or visit our [website](#).

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