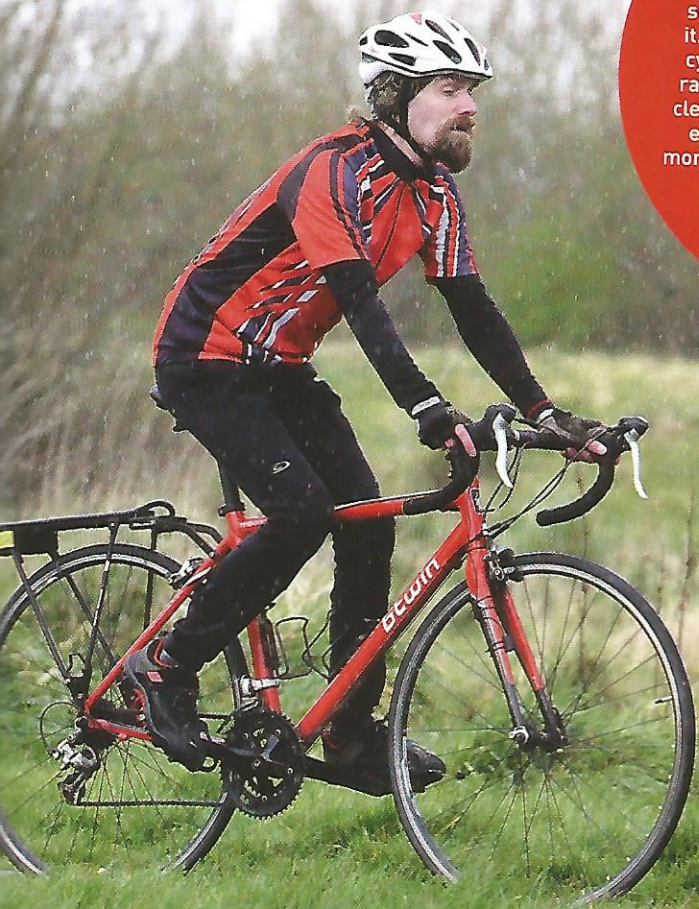


## Exercise

"Most people don't understand what cystic fibrosis is, or what it does, until someone close to them is affected by it. Exercise is crucial to everyone with cystic fibrosis because it can slow the rate of decline in lung function, help to clear mucus from the lungs to help with easier breathing, as well as creating more reserves for the lungs to use during periods of lung infection."

*Jennifer Westmoreland, head of the Cystic Fibrosis Trust's community and fundraising events*



### SUCCESS STORY

## Cycling worked for me

"Remember that when you get home you need to eat — and it could be more than you think."

"I took the date of the event and then worked backwards, adding 10 miles each week to my training until I was achieving the sort of distances I needed. It meant I had about a six-month training programme."

"It's only now sinking in what I've achieved. I'd never cycled as far as 100 miles before, and I did it, followed by another 200 over the following three days. But that's not to say I've not already started nurturing that small question in the back of my mind: 'what next?'"

### THE FACTS

## What is cystic fibrosis?

Around 10,000 people in the UK have cystic fibrosis, an inherited condition caused by a faulty gene. One in 25 people carries the gene. If two carriers have a child it has a one in four chance of having CF.

The defective gene is the one which controls the movement of salt and water in and out of the cells, and this leads to a build-up of thick, sticky mucus. This mucus clogs the lungs and leads to life-threatening lung infections, and also obstructs the pancreas, preventing natural enzymes from breaking down food for absorption of necessary nutrients.

There is currently no cure for cystic fibrosis. In the 1960s a child diagnosed with CF would be lucky to reach his or her fifth birthday. However, significant advances in treatments — nutrition, physiotherapy, antibiotics and, when necessary, transplants — over the past 50 years now mean that more than half of the current population with cystic fibrosis will live to be over 40.

diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, as the CF affected his pancreatic functioning. This means that Johnson needs to eat a huge number of calories each day, while also taking enough insulin to counter the effects of sugars in the food. As Johnson's body doesn't get all the nutrients it needs anyway — he struggles to reach 50kg in weight — he has to carefully balance the benefits of exercise with the extra demands for food.

### Dietary needs

Johnson's medical team includes a dietician, physiotherapist and diabetic nurse. "I've been with the same hospital 10 years now," he says, "so they know me really well physically and mentally. They are very supportive and helpful."

His minimum calorie requirement per day is 2,500 calories, but this increases to 3,000 per day when he is cycling long distances. He has various fruit juice-based supplement

drinks, which provide a power-packed 300 calories in just 150ml, and Creons help with food absorption. Also, to the envy of anybody trying to lose weight, his dietician told him to grate cheese on everything and to fry food! When asked if he has a favourite food Johnson laughs, "I've taught myself to like full-fat milk — it's not something everybody likes but it's a staple for me."

Regular exercise has meant that Johnson's lungs are functioning better now than they have for some years, and he's also found that he's good at hill-climbing, partly as he's light. With at least three major climbs on the Coast to Coast (Honister, Whinlatter and Hartside), this should stand him in good stead.

Johnson lives with his wife Tania in Warrington and works 30 hours a week as the North West regional administrator for Christian Aid. You can follow Johnson's progress on his blog at [mattyj1979.wordpress.com](http://mattyj1979.wordpress.com).