

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Taking pancreatic enzymes

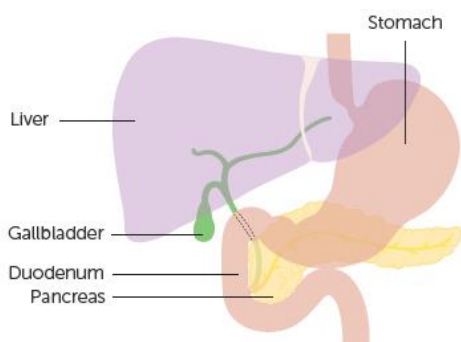
The aim of taking pancreatic enzymes is to treat malabsorption syndrome, which is a disorder that occurs when people are unable to absorb nutrients from their diet due to certain pancreatic problems.

Who may need this leaflet?

Your doctor or dietitian may have advised you to take pancreatic enzymes because your body struggles to absorb/digest carbohydrates, fats and/or proteins.

What does the pancreas do?

The pancreas is a large gland that produces digestive fluids, insulin and hormones to do with the digestion of food. These digestive fluids help with the break down and absorption of nutrients.



Symptoms of pancreatic insufficiency

If you have a lack of pancreatic enzymes you may have some of the following symptoms:

- Diarrhoea
- Weight loss
- Steatorrhoea (oily stools)
- Bloating
- Feeling full
- Stomach pain.

Taking pancreatic enzymes

It is important that you take pancreatic enzymes correctly:

- Enzymes should be **taken with all meals and snacks**, including milky drinks.
- Swallow the capsules whole with a couple of sips of a drink. Don't take the capsules with hot drinks, as they won't work properly. If you are eating hot food, make sure you swallow the capsules with a cold drink.
- Don't chew the capsules as this can cause mouth ulcers.
- You should take the enzymes at the start of a meal. They won't work properly if you take them after a meal.
- If you are taking more than one capsule, or your meal will last more than 20 minutes, take half the dose when you start eating, and the other half during the meal.
- You will need more enzymes for larger meals, or if the food has more fat in it (takeaways, roasted or fried food, puddings).

- If you take nutritional supplement drinks, you will need to take enzymes with these as well.
- Don't store the capsules in hot places as this can stop them working properly (glove box of your car, near radiators, in direct sunlight).
- Don't worry if you forget to take your enzymes. Just take the usual dose with your next meal or snack.

When NOT to take pancreatic enzymes

Pancreatic enzymes only work when they are taken with food. There are some foods and drinks that you don't need to take enzymes with. These include:

- Drinks with only a splash of milk (including tea or coffee), fruit squashes, fizzy drinks, or alcoholic drinks.
- Small amounts of fruit (except bananas and avocados) or dried fruit.
- Small amounts of vegetables (except potatoes, beans, and pulses such as lentils).
- Sugary sweets, for example, jelly babies, wine gums, fruit pastilles or marshmallows.

Your pancreatic enzyme doses

Breakfast	
Lunch	
Evening meal	
Snacks	
Other	

Contact details

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics
Telephone: 01623 676025

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions
Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet (if relevant) please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

To be completed by the Communications office
Leaflet code: PIL202408-04-TPE
Created: February 2021 / Revised: August 2024 /
Review Date: August 2026