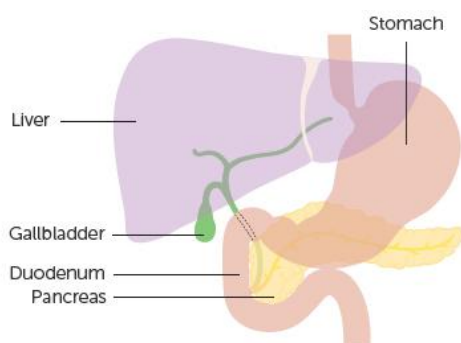


INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Taking pancreatic enzymes

What does the pancreas do?

The pancreas is a gland underneath the stomach. It produces digestive enzymes and insulin. Both are essential for you to gain nutrition from your food. Digestive enzymes break down proteins, carbohydrates, and fats so that it can be absorbed from your gut into the bloodstream. Without these enzymes, food will pass through your digestive system without being absorbed.



What is malabsorption?

When your pancreas is diseased (e.g. in pancreatic cancer), inflamed (e.g. in pancreatitis) or affected by surgery it may not be producing enough enzymes. Without enzymes, foods are not absorbed well, which is called malabsorption.

Symptoms of pancreatic insufficiency:

- Unintentional weight loss.
- Pale or yellow stools.
- Floating/difficult to flush stools.
- Oily/greasy stools.
- Diarrhoea.

- Bloating and excess wind.
- Stomach pain.

What is pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy?

To help your body absorb food you can take the enzymes you need in the form of a capsule.

Pancreatic enzyme supplements are made from pork. There are currently no alternatives.

How do I take pancreatic enzymes?

- Enzymes should be taken with all calorific meals and snacks, including milky drinks.
- Swallow the capsules whole. Don't chew or open the capsules as the granules can cause mouth ulcers and the capsules won't be activated at the right time during digestion.
- 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.
- 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).
- Don't store the capsules in hot places as this can stop them working properly (for example the glove box of your car, near radiators, in direct sunlight).

You may also be prescribed a medicine called a Proton Pump Inhibitor (PPI) such as omeprazole or lansoprazole. These reduce the acid in the stomach which improves how the enzymes work.

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).
- Small amounts of sugary sweets, for example, jelly babies, wine gums, fruit pastilles, or marshmallows.

What if I can't swallow them?

There are smaller capsules which are a lower dose of enzymes, if able to swallow these you will need to increase the number of capsules.

If you can't swallow the capsule, you will need to open the capsule and mix the granules with an acidic puree such as apple sauce. You will need to swallow this mixture straight away without chewing. After taking this, rinse your mouth around with water to ensure the enzymes don't get stuck in your teeth.

Do I need a low-fat diet?

It is not necessary to follow a low-fat diet. Higher-fat foods may be beneficial if you have lost weight. With higher fat foods you will require more enzymes.

Your pancreatic enzyme doses:

Breakfast	
Lunch	
Evening meal	
Snacks	
Other	

Your enzyme need can increase over time especially if the condition in your pancreas is progressive. If you are having ongoing symptoms of malabsorption your dietitian will advise on increasing the dose.

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.

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