



Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy (PERT)



Patient information

What does the pancreas do?

Your **pancreas** is a gland in the abdomen which produces insulin and pancreatic juices. These juices contain digestive enzymes which help you digest kai.

Pancreatic enzymes help break down fats, proteins and carbohydrates in your kai.

Why are pancreatic enzymes important?

Enzymes are needed to break down the food we eat so our body can absorb the nutrients.

Your **pancreas** can't produce enough enzymes to digest your food if you have had some of your pancreas removed, have pancreatic duct obstruction or have pancreatic cancer.



What are the symptoms of reduced pancreatic enzymes?

If your **pancreas** is not producing digestive enzymes you may experience some of the following symptoms



Pain in the upper abdomen that sometimes extends through the back

Abdominal pain may feel worse after eating and it could feel like cramps

Steatorrhea, pale, loose, greasy, foul smelling stools that are difficult to flush

Nausea and /or vomiting

Abdominal bloating and fullness

Weight loss

What is Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy (PERT)?

PERT replaces pancreatic enzymes that a healthy pancreas would usually produce. PERT can help if your pancreas is not producing enough enzymes to break down your food.

PERT comes in capsules and there are several brands available. The capsules contain a dose of enzymes measured in units.

How to take PERT?

The number of units that you need will depend on the food you are eating and will vary between main meals and snacks. For example, you might have 50,000 units (two capsules) for a main meal and 25,000 units (one capsule) for a snack.

Meals with an extremely high fat content (eg takeaway fish and chips), will require more **PERT capsules** to digest the fat. Discuss this with your dietitian.



+ Meals



+ Snack

Remember You can eat normal meals

Don't take PERT capsules with over-the-counter antacids that contain calcium or magnesium.

Do not break the capsule, swallow it whole

Take the capsule/s at the start of a meal or snack. If the meal or snack last longer than 20 minutes, you should take another capsule.

Talk to your doctor about whether PERT can help you. Your doctor and dietitian can help you to make a plan for how to take PERT and manage your diet.