

Patient information

Guidance to reduce PERT doses

Therapies Dietetics Department

The pancreas is a gland behind your stomach. The pancreas makes digestive juices, which includes enzymes. Enzymes help you to break down your food and drinks into pieces small enough to be digested properly.

If the pancreas is damaged, it may not make enough enzymes for proper digestion. This condition is called **malabsorption**.

Symptoms of malabsorption include:

- Losing weight without trying, even when eating well
- Loose, large, watery stools
- Greasy, pale stools
- Urgent need to open your bowels after eating
- Bloating or feeling full quickly
- Stomach discomfort while eating

You may be prescribed pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT) if your pancreas is damaged, such as after pancreatitis or surgery.

PERT comes in capsule form and is taken with meals, snacks, and some drinks. It contains replacement enzymes to aid digestion. Common brands are Creon® and Nutrizym®.

PERT helps break down food into small pieces, allowing your bowel to absorb the nutrients. These nutrients provide energy and can help you gain weight and strength if you've lost weight or muscle due to illness or surgery.

Some people can reduce or stop taking PERT if it's no longer needed. This leaflet, provided by your pancreas specialist dietitian, offers guidance on reducing your PERT dose.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact your specialist dietitian.

Dietitian name: _____

Contact number: _____

If you have any symptoms of malabsorption, do not reduce your PERT dose. Contact your dietitian immediately.

Who can reduce PERT doses?

After you have had severe acute pancreatitis, you may be able to reduce your PERT dose:

- Wait **3 months after discharge** from the hospital before reducing your dose.

After certain types of pancreatic surgery, you may be able to reduce your PERT dose:

- If the surgery you had was a left pancreatectomy or distal pancreatectomy, you may be able to reduce your dose.
- If the left pancreatectomy or distal pancreatectomy surgery was to remove cancer, wait **9 months after finishing any cancer treatment (e.g. chemotherapy)** before reducing your dose.
- If you had this surgery for another reason, wait **6 months after surgery** before reducing your dose.
- Do **not** reduce your dose if you had a 'Whipples' procedure, pylorus-preserving pancreaticoduodenectomy (PPPD), bypass procedure, or total pancreatectomy.

Do not reduce your dose if you have any symptoms of malabsorption.

Reducing your dose

Your usual PERT dose: _____

Per meal: _____ Per snack/milky drink/nutritional supplement: _____

Reduce your PERT dose gradually and watch for any symptoms of malabsorption. It may be helpful to keep a food and symptom diary to keep track of any symptoms during this time. Your dietitian can provide you with one of these if needed.

Step 1:

- Reduce your PERT dose by one capsule per meal **and** one capsule per snack.
- If symptoms of malabsorption occur, return to your usual dose.

Step 2:

- If you have no symptoms for **two weeks** on the reduced dose, you can lower it again by one capsule per meal and per snack.
- If symptoms of malabsorption occur, go back to the last dose without symptoms.

Step 3:

- Continue this process every two weeks until you either stop taking PERT or have symptoms of malabsorption. If symptoms occur, go back to the last dose without symptoms.

If you experience symptoms of malabsorption when trying to reduce your PERT dose, go back to your last dose without symptoms. You may be able to try and reduce your dose again in 6 month's time.

For questions about reducing your PERT dose, or if you're concerned about weight loss or decreased appetite, contact your specialist dietitian as soon as possible.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

Royal Liverpool University Hospital dietitians

Tel: 0151 706 2120

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2120

British Dietetic Association: www.bda.uk.com

Pancreatic Society for Great Britain and Ireland: www.psgbi.org/

Guts UK: www.gutscharity.org.uk

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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