

Pancreatic Enzymes for Oral Feeding

Why does my child need pancreatic enzymes?

The pancreas produces digestive enzymes. Enzymes are proteins that help digest, or break down, food. If the pancreas is not working properly, your child may need to take a medication to provide these enzymes. The medication, referred to as pancreatic enzymes, contains a mixture of the following digestive enzymes:

- Lipase - digests fats
- Amylase - digests starches
- Protease - digests proteins

Pancreatic enzymes will help your child to:

- digest foods
- absorb nutrients, including vitamins and minerals
- have more energy to grow and play

What do pancreatic enzymes look like?

Pancreatic enzymes given by mouth come in:

- Capsules that contain tiny enzyme beads.
- Different doses and sizes.

It is important to know which brand and dose has been prescribed for your child.

When will my child need pancreatic enzymes?

- Give pancreatic enzymes right before every meal and snack that contains fats, proteins, and starches (complex carbohydrates).
- You do not need to give pancreatic enzymes before foods that contain simple sugars such as fruit or juice.
- Your dietitian can give you more information on matching the number of enzymes to give with different types of foods.
- If meals last longer than 30 minutes, give half the dose at the beginning of the meal and the other half midway through eating.

What are the changes I should look for after starting pancreatic enzymes?

You may notice changes in your child's bowel pattern once pancreatic enzymes are started. The following are signs that your child is absorbing the food:

- stools are more formed
- less frequent bowel movements
- decrease in stool odor
- decrease in greasy stools
- decrease in gassiness or belly pain

If your child continues to have abdominal issues, talk to your doctor, nurse practitioner, or registered dietitian.



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How will I know if the pancreatic enzyme dose is correct?

Each child is different and will need an individualized plan for pancreatic enzymes. Your healthcare provider will tell you:

- The exact amount of pancreatic enzymes your child needs for each meal and snack.
- When to adjust your child's pancreatic enzyme plan.

Do not change your child's dose without speaking to his health care team.

The following factors affect your child's pancreatic enzyme dose:

- Your child's rate of growth. As he grows, the pancreatic enzyme dose may have to be adjusted.
- The protein, fat, and complex carbohydrate content of your child's diet.
- The amount of natural pancreatic enzymes your child's body makes.
- The amount of natural acid in your child's stomach.

How do I get pancreatic enzymes?

- Pancreatic enzymes require a prescription from your health care provider.
- Allow your pharmacy a few days to order the pancreatic enzymes. Most local pharmacies do not keep pancreatic enzymes in stock.
- Refill his prescription before it runs out.
- Always check the expiration date.

Can I use generic or over-the-counter pancreatic enzymes?

- No. Generic pancreatic enzymes are not the same as the prescription products.
- **Do not** use over-the-counter supplements labeled as pancreatic or digestive enzymes. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not approve these products. They are not safe and may not be effective.
- Make sure your child receives the brand of pancreatic enzymes that was prescribed for him by his health care team.
- If your insurance does not cover the brand that was prescribed, contact his health care team.

How do I store pancreatic enzymes?

- Keep in a safe place, out of reach of children.
- Keep in a cool, dry place.
- **Do not** refrigerate.
- **Do not** keep them on a shelf over the stove or on top of the refrigerator. These areas can become warm.
- **Do not** keep them in the glove compartment or trunk of a car.
- If going to the beach, we recommend keeping your child's pancreatic enzymes in a cooler, but not directly next to freezer packs. Food can be stored with pancreatic enzymes.
- Pancreatic enzymes **may not** be stored properly during delivery. If you notice new symptoms such as loose, greasy stools, foul-smelling stools, or increased gas after starting a new bottle of pancreatic enzymes, contact his health care team.



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