



A guide to taking pancreatic enzymes (Creon)

Why do I need to take pancreatic enzymes?

If your pancreas has been damaged by disease, or if you have had surgery to this gland, it may be unable to produce certain enzymes, which are needed to help you to digest your food. These enzymes are called:

- *Lipase* which helps to break down fat
- *Protease* which helps to break down protein
- *Amylase* which helps to break down carbohydrate.

If your pancreas is not producing these enzymes you may develop a condition known as steatorrhoea. This is where your stools (motion) are smelly and have a lot of fat in them. This can make them difficult to flush away. You can also have pains in your abdomen (tummy) after you have eaten certain foods, especially fatty or greasy things.

What are the benefits of taking Creon?

These symptoms can be helped by giving you capsules to take which contain pancreatic enzymes and which will help you to absorb your food. These capsules are usually called Creon and they replace the three enzymes that the pancreas gland would normally make itself. They also contain small quantities of other enzymes, which our body needs when we eat a meal. **Creon is a pork-based product. The pork-derived active ingredient is contained in a capsule. This has been approved for use by Jewish patients by the Chief Rabbi. Muslim patients may also use this medication.***

When should I take Creon?

You will need to take Creon capsules whenever you eat a meal. It is best to take them just as you start to eat your food as this means that they will be mixed with the food in the stomach.

Can I vary the dose of Creon?

Creon capsules are available in different strengths; we normally recommend a starting dose of 40,000-unit capsules, taking between 1 and 3 for each meal or snack. Your doctor or nurse will discuss with you which strength is best for you. However, you are the person who knows your symptoms best so it may be appropriate for you to alter the dose yourself. Failure to gain weight and persistent loose bowel motions are the main reasons you may need to increase the dose, but please discuss this with your hospital doctor, GP or nurse clinician.

If you eat a meal that is high in fat such as fish and chips, you will need to take more capsules, but your doctor or nurse clinician will be able to advise you regarding this if you are uncertain.

*If, and only, if no other medicines than the ones containing prohibited substances are suitable to cure the illness or disease in the opinion of the physician, then the medicine containing the prohibited substance should be prescribed and taken by the patient." Dr Abdul Hamid Mohamed, London Central Mosque Trust

Can I take too much Creon?

No, the Creon that your body doesn't need for the digestion (breaking down) of your food travels through the bowel and is excreted when you have your bowels open. Although you may experience some burning around the anus, it is not possible to take too much Creon. Take your Creon whenever you eat. This is important, as certain snacks have a lot of fat in them, particularly crisps and chocolate.

Do I have to restrict my diet?

No, you do not have to restrict your diet, but you may find that certain foods, especially those with a lot of fat in them, cause your motions to be loose and smelly. If that is the case you may need to take a higher dose of Creon. You need to follow a balanced diet that will help you to maintain your weight, or even put some on. You may wish to read our other booklet 'Eating Help Yourself' which gives advice about which foods are best to eat.

For how long do I have to take Creon?

If you have had surgery to remove your entire pancreas, or if it has been damaged by cancer, you will need to take Creon for the rest of your life. If you have only had part of your pancreas removed, it is possible that as it recovers from surgery, it will be able to start producing enough enzymes again. You may be able to reduce or even stop the Creon. However, if you start to have symptoms such as loose, smelly stools again you will need to tell your doctor or nurse. You may have to restart the Creon.

What happens if I don't take Creon?

It can be difficult taking the Creon capsules with every meal, but if you do not take them your symptoms will continue and can become worse. If you stop taking them for a long time you will not absorb some important vitamins that your body needs (particularly vitamins A, D, E and K) and you may lose weight.

Is there anything I can take instead?

Unfortunately, there is no alternative treatment available which will help you to absorb the fats and vitamins from your food.

Are there any interactions with other drugs?

There have been no reported interactions. You should always inform your doctor or nurse clinician about any other drugs you may be taking.

Are there any side effects?

When you collect the tablets from pharmacy, you will be given a leaflet produced by the manufacturers which will contain information about possible side effects.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **patient.information@christie.nhs.uk**

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