

National shortage of pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (Creon®) - key facts for patients

Background

The information on this information sheet is specifically intended for patients who have either had pancreatic surgery, have a pancreatic disease, or who are prescribed somatostatin analogue treatment.

There is currently a worldwide issue with the supply of pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT); the most commonly used product in the UK is Creon, but all brands and products are affected. This medication is used to treat patients whose pancreas does not produce sufficient pancreatic enzymes to enable absorption of food from the gut. Common symptoms of this include:

- Bloating
- Excess wind
- Cramping abdominal pain
- Diarrhoea / pale floating stools
- Urgency to open bowels

What does this mean for me?

We need to make best use of limited supplies of PERT whilst still ensuring patients' symptoms are managed. There are some simple steps we can take to try and achieve this.

- Ensuring that where possible patients are taking medication to reduce acid levels in the stomach, as this increases the effectiveness of PERT e.g. lansoprazole, omeprazole or famotidine. If you are not currently taking a medication like this, please discuss with your GP. If you are currently on a low dose your GP may increase this to get the best effect.
- Reduce your current mealtime dose of PERT by one capsule with each meal and spread the dose out throughout your meal.

What if I also have diabetes?

Reducing your dose of PERT may affect absorption of carbohydrate. This can affect blood sugar levels and increase the risk of hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar). We would therefore recommend checking your blood sugar levels regularly, including after meals, and speaking with your diabetes team. You may need to reduce your insulin doses by 10-20%.

Despite this, it is important that patients with diabetes try to reduce their dose of PERT while there is a shortage, because if supplies were to run out, it would have a greater impact on diabetic control than dose reduction.

Impact on other medications

The absorption of other medications from the gut may be affected by changes in the dose of PERT that you take. This is unlikely to be significant for the majority of medications, but it may be important for certain medications such as blood thinners (e.g. warfarin), medication to control seizures or the oral contraceptive pill. If you are taking any of these medications, please discuss with your GP before reducing the dose of your PERT.

Impact on absorption of vitamins and minerals

Absorption of fat-soluble vitamins is particularly affected by low levels of pancreatic enzymes within the gut. For this reason we would recommend a calcium and vitamin D supplement which can be purchased over the counter in your local pharmacy, or you can discuss with your general practitioner.

We would also recommend taking a multi-vitamin tablet daily. These can be purchased in pharmacies and most supermarkets.

What happens if I run out of Creon?

You may need to try more than one community pharmacy to obtain supplies. If after trying several pharmacies, you are unable to obtain supplies then please discuss with your GP who will be aware of local plans in this situation.

If you have diabetes, check your blood sugar levels regularly, including after meals, and contact your diabetes team to seek advice on dose adjustment. If you are on insulin you may need to reduce your insulin doses by 10-20%.

For further information

Creon Support line (Viartis) Telephone: 0800 8086410 Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm
Service provided by Viartis, the manufacturer of Creon, for patients and healthcare providers to help find local community pharmacies that may have stock of Creon.

PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) for help, advice, and information about NHS services. You can contact them on freephone 0800 032 02 02, email pals@nhct.nhs.uk

Useful websites

If you would like further information about health conditions and treatment options, you may wish to have a look at the NHS website at www.nhs.uk

If you would like to find accessibility information for our hospitals, please visit www.accessable.co.uk

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