

Enzymes in an Early Learning Environment

Most children with CF are pancreatic insufficient, meaning their pancreas does not produce the enzymes that are needed to break down food for digestion. This can make it very difficult to absorb nutrients from food and maintain a healthy weight.

As a result of this, pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy is needed to help digest food.

Pancreatic Enzymes

Pancreatic enzymes are taken with all meals and snacks containing carbohydrates, fat and protein. They don't need to be taken with simple sugars such as fruit, lollies, juice, cordial, and water.

The enzymes travel down to the stomach where they work to help break down food.

Like vitamins, they are not harmful to other children.

Enzymes are available in two forms; microspheres for babies and young children and capsules for older children and adults.

Dosage

Dosage is different for everyone but is generally based on the amount of fat in the food. Parents will need to communicate their child's dosage to the centre/school.

It is important to ensure enzymes are given when required. If enzymes are skipped, the child may have tummy aches and diarrhoea. If a child has too many enzymes there are no immediate side effects, but over a few weeks they may become constipated.



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Babies and young children will need enzymes administered by staff with all meals and snacks, including bottles of milk. Older children will become more independent and be able to swallow enzyme capsules with supervision.

Enzyme dosage will be calculated by parents, based on the amount of food the child will be eating.

- Enzymes need to be taken immediately before eating/feeding.
- If the child cannot swallow capsules, microspheres need to be mixed with apple puree and spoon-fed.
- Enzymes are effective for about thirty minutes, so food needs to be consumed within this time.
- If the child takes longer than 30 minutes to finish eating, they will require more enzymes.

- Spare enzymes should be kept at the centre for any extra food consumed, spillages of enzymes etc.
- If you think a child has had the wrong dosage of enzymes, it is important to let the family know so they can monitor for symptoms.
- Enzyme processes and dosages should be detailed in the child's Medical Plan.

More Information

Enzymes can be well managed in an early learning environment with good communication with the child's parents. This will ensure both the staff and family feel confident and the child receives the enzymes required at each meal.

For more information about CF, we have free eLearning modules, including one specific to enzymes, as well as other resources for educators, available on our [CFSmart website](#).