

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. Without enzymes, food will not be properly digested and the child may have tummy aches and diarrhoea.

Enzymes are available in two forms; microspheres for babies and young children and capsules for older children and adults. **Like vitamins, they are not harmful to other children.**

Enzymes in an early learning environment

The child with CF will need enzymes administered by staff with meals and snacks, including bottles of milk. Enzyme dosage is different for everyone but is generally based on the amount of fat in the food. Parents will communicate how much enzymes are needed with each meal/bottle to the centre/kindy. Enzyme processes and dosages should be detailed in the child's CF Action Plan.



Enzyme tips:

- 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/kindy 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 parents know so they can monitor for symptoms.

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](#).