

# PATIENT GUIDE TO EXOCRINE PANCREATIC INSUFFICIENCY (EPI) IN PANCREATIC CANCER

## UNDERSTANDING SYMPTOMS, TREATMENT, AND DAILY MANAGEMENT FOR EPI AND PANCREATIC ENZYME REPLACEMENT THERAPY (PERT)

Your **pancreas** is a vital organ in your abdomen with two main jobs: an endocrine function that helps control blood sugar, and an **exocrine function**. In its exocrine role, your pancreas makes and releases **digestive enzymes**. These enzymes travel to your small intestine to **break down food**—like fats, proteins, and carbohydrates—helping your body **absorb nutrients** for energy and health. Think of them as tiny helpers that unlock the nutrients from your food!

### EPI: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **What is EPI?** Occurs when your pancreas doesn't produce enough of the crucial digestive enzymes your body needs to break down food properly.
- **Causes of EPI:** EPI often develops when conditions like pancreatic cancer, or treatments such as pancreatic surgery, damage the pancreas and reduce its ability to produce enough digestive enzymes.
- **Impact of EPI:** Without enough enzymes, your body struggles to digest food properly, which then affects your ability to absorb vital nutrients.

### EPI SYMPTOMS: MOST COMMON

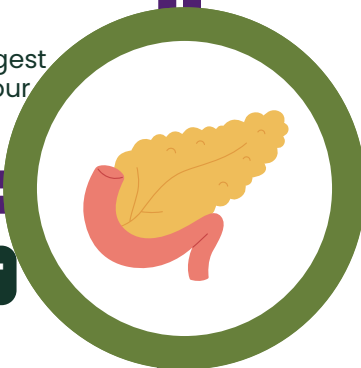
#### What are the Symptoms of EPI?

When you have EPI your body can't properly break down food, which may cause you to have some of these symptoms:

- Indigestion
- Bloating
- Abdominal pain
- Weight loss
- Frequent diarrhea
- Stools that are pale, oily, or foul
- Excessive gas



*\*It's important to note: Some symptoms can also stem from pancreatic cancer or its treatments. Always discuss how you are feeling with your healthcare team.*



### TREATMENT & MANAGEMENT

**What is PERT?** Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy (PERT) is a **prescription medication** that replaces the digestive enzymes your pancreas isn't making enough of.

These critical enzymes help your body **break down the fats, proteins, and carbohydrates** in the food you eat. PERT helps your body break down food so you can absorb important nutrients you need.



**Adjusting your PERT dose is common**, as needs may change with diet, symptoms, or other treatments. Always work with your healthcare provider to find the right dose.

### GETTING THE MOST FROM PERT

**Take PERT during every meal and snack.** These enzymes help break down the food and drinks you have, so it's important to take PERT when you eat to make sure it does its job.



**Remember to bring your PERT with you when you go out**, just in case you have a meal or snack while you're away from home.

### PARTNERING WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM

**It's important to have open conversations with your healthcare provider**, especially within the first few weeks of starting PERT, after any dose changes, or if you notice any new or worsening symptoms. Tell them about any ongoing symptoms, side effects, or concerns about your diet, religion, or allergies. This helps them optimize your EPI management and ensure your PERT dose is appropriate.

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This document, created through a collaboration between Canopy Cancer Collective and AbbVie Inc, highlights information related to patients diagnosed with EPI due to pancreatic cancer. The information contained herein is provided for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace discussions with a healthcare provider. All decisions regarding patient care must be made by a healthcare provider considering the unique characteristics of the patient.

# PREPARING FOR YOUR APPOINTMENTS: SYMPTOM NOTES & DISCUSSION GUIDE

This guide is here to help you **make the most of your appointments** with your doctor, dietitian, or other members of your healthcare team.

**Understanding the symptoms** of Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency (EPI) **and discussing them** can **help your healthcare team better understand your treatment experience**. This process also helps them effectively adjust your Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy (PERT) dose. When you know what symptoms are related to EPI, you can more openly discuss and **ask important questions about managing your EPI and PERT dose**.



## QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM

### When You're Starting PERT:

- "What is EPI?"
- "Will having EPI affect my pancreatic cancer treatment plan?"
- "What is PERT, and when and how do I start taking it?"
- "What should I expect when I start PERT?"
- "What should I know about taking PERT (e.g., serious and common side effects)?"
- "Will I be on PERT long-term?"
- "How does my diet influence how I feel and my PERT dose?"

### While on PERT Treatment:

- "How will we know if my PERT dose is right for me?"
- "What should prompt me to contact your office about my PERT?"
- "What should I do if I continue to have signs and symptoms of malabsorption (not absorbing nutrients from food) such as abdominal pain, abdominal distention, bloating, fatty stools, or weight loss?"

### Other Important Questions:

- "Are there patient assistance programs or financial support options for PERT?"
- "What are the storage requirements for my PERT prescription?"
- "Who on my care team is my primary point of contact for ongoing PERT management questions (e.g., changes in how I feel, dietary adjustments, medication-specific questions, general inquiries)?"

## SYMPTOMS

- Oily stools
- Unexplained
- Weight loss
- Bloating
- Gas
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal pain



It's especially important to share information in the first few weeks after starting PERT, after any dose changes, and with new or worsening symptoms.

### Notes

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## IMPORTANT NOTE

This guide provides general information and is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult your healthcare provider for personalized guidance on your EPI diagnosis and treatment.