

# Pancreatic cancer, diet and you

Lisa Woodrow & Anisah Begum

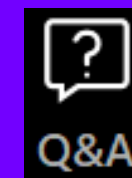
5th May 2026

# What we'll be talking about

- What does the pancreas do?
- What diet and digestive symptoms can people with pancreatic cancer experience?
- What is pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT), and why is it important?
- What foods should I eat or avoid eating?
- What is a dietitian, and should I be seen by one?
- Answering your questions and where you can find further support

# Housekeeping

- This webinar is aimed at people with a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, or people supporting a family member or friend with pancreatic cancer. If you are a healthcare professional, we have lots of resources, information and events on our website: [www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk](http://www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk)
- **Follow up:** the recording from this session will be shared with you via email in the next couple of days, along with links to useful resources.
- **Q&A:** please send your questions in via the Q&A box at the bottom of your screen
- **Captions:** select 'show captions' in the bottom of your screen for live captions.
- **Feedback:** at the end of the event, we'll share a link to a 3-minute feedback form. We'd really appreciate any feedback you can give to help us improve future sessions.



# Our speakers

**Lisa Woodrow**

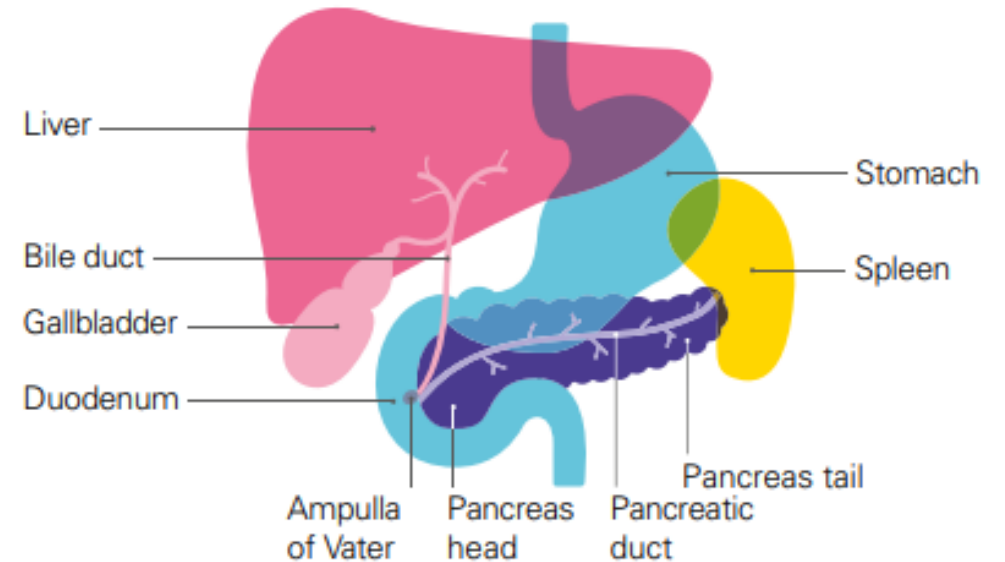
**Nurse Specialist at Pancreatic Cancer UK**

**Anisah Begum, HPB Dietitian, Manchester Royal Infirmary**

# What does the pancreas do?

# The pancreas – what does it do?

- The pancreas has two jobs: blood sugar control (endocrine) and producing digestive enzymes (exocrine)
- Digestive enzymes are released when you eat and help break down your food
- When you have cancer, the pancreas doesn't work properly anymore and doesn't produce these digestive enzymes – this is called PEI or pancreatic exocrine insufficiency





**What digestive symptoms  
can people with pancreatic  
cancer experience?**

# What digestive symptoms can people with pancreatic cancer experience?

- Feeling sick or being sick
- Pale / greasy poo
- Tummy pain
- Bloating
- Reflux or heartburn
- Increased wind (burping or farting)
- Diarrhoea
- Increased tiredness
- Weight loss
- Change in blood sugars ⬆️⬆️



## Which of the following symptoms have you or your loved one experienced?

- Feeling sick or being sick
- Pale / greasy poo
- Tummy pain
- Bloating
- Reflux or heartburn
- Increased wind (burping or farting)
- Diarrhoea
- Increased tiredness
- Weight loss
- Change in blood sugars  

# What is pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT), and why is it important?

# PERT – what is it?

- Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy
- A medication to replace a job of the pancreas to help break down food
- Different brands are available in the UK
  - Creon (10,000 unit and 25,000 unit capsules)
  - Nutrizym (22,000 unit capsules)
  - Pancrex V (powder)
  - Other brands are available due to current shortages



**Are you or your loved one taking pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy?**

- Yes
- No

# PERT – who needs it?

- Anyone diagnosed with pancreatic cancer
- Most people who have had surgery to their pancreas
- Anyone with significant pancreas damage



## How confident do you feel about your understanding of how to take PERT e.g. Creon?

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Neither confident/not confident
- Not very confident
- Not confident at all

# PERT – how do I take it?

- Starting amount:
  - Creon 25,000 capsules or nutrizym 22,000
  - 3 capsules with meals
  - 2 capsules with snacks, puddings, nourishing drinks (milky drinks like cappuccinos or milkshakes)
- Take capsules with a cold drink
- Spread it out
  - For example, at meals have one capsule at the start, one in the middle and one towards the end



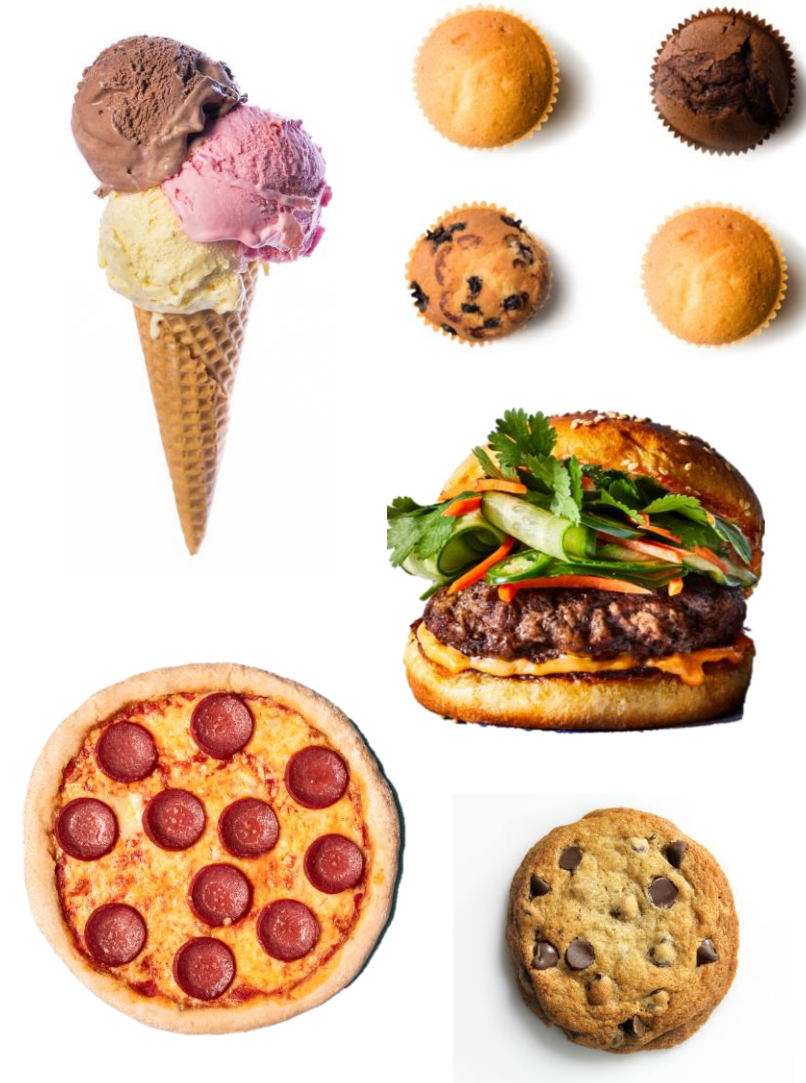
# What foods should I eat or avoid eating?

## Where do you look for health information and advice?

- Google or online search
- AI platform, e.g. Chat GPT, Gemini
- My doctor, nurses etc
- Pancreatic Cancer UK or other organisations
- Family and friends
- Other

# What foods should I eat?

- Focus on high energy and high protein foods such as cream cakes, biscuits, milky foods (yoghurts, ice cream, cheese), pork pies, sausage rolls, hummus, samosas, mixed nuts
- If you are struggling with your appetite, you may be prescribed supplements such as Fortisip or Ensures to help keep your weight and strength. You will need to take PERT to digest these.
- If you have been diagnosed with diabetes this advice might be different, always check with your medical team



# What foods should I avoid?

The short answer.... Nothing!

There is no evidence to suggest avoiding certain foods makes symptoms better.

The long answer... focus on things to add in rather than take away

Lots of foods are turned into sugars, for example all fruit and vegetables get turned into sugar so they can help fuel your body!

Sugars and fats are really important parts of the diet to help keep your weight and strength up

## Myth busting – things you may have seen online or through AI

**Myth**

**Sugar is cancer causing or makes cancer worse**

**Myth**

**Plant-based enzymes can replace PERT**

**Myth**

**A low-fat diet should be followed**

**Myth**

**Vitamins and herbal supplements can cure the cancer**

**Do I need to be seen by a dietitian?**

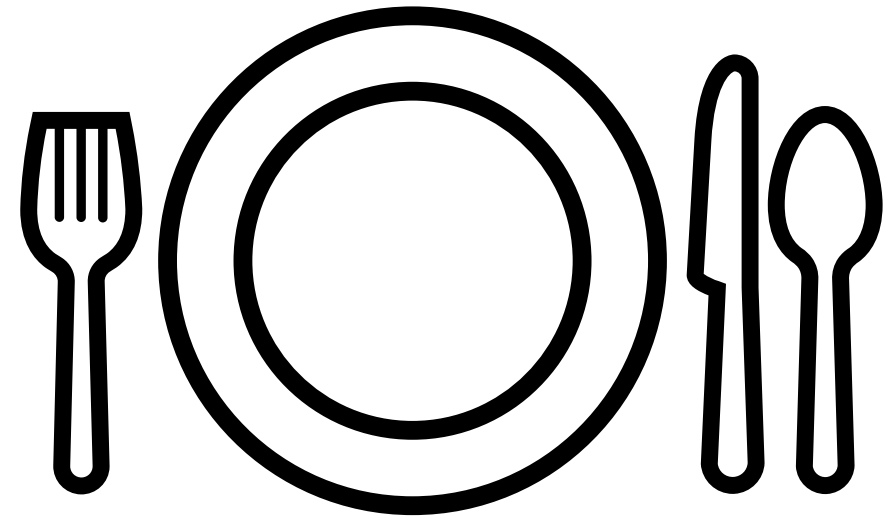
# Do I need to be seen by a dietitian?

## What is a dietitian?

- We use evidenced based guidelines to support people with food and nutrition through their health conditions.
- We are a regulated body of health care professionals, just like physiotherapists or nurses

## What would a dietitian be able to support me with?

- If you have lost lots of weight or strength
- If you have newly started on PERT
- If you have symptoms despite being on PERT



# Key things to remember

- 1) The **pancreas has two jobs**: blood sugar control and producing digestive enzymes. When you have pancreatic cancer one or both of these functions might not work properly
- 2) There is a **wide range of symptoms** of your body not breaking food down properly
- 3) These **symptoms can be managed by taking PERT**, also called Creon or Nutrizym, with food and nourishing drinks
- 4) You **do not need to avoid any foods in particular**. Focusing on high protein, high energy foods will help maintain your weight and strength
- 5) A **dietitian can help you find solutions** for weight loss, strength loss and ongoing digestive symptoms. Do not be afraid to ask if you are struggling!
- 6) Always **talk to a health professional about information you find online or through Chat GPT and AI**, including calling Pancreatic Cancer UK's Support Line
- 7) **You're not alone**

# Who can you contact for support?

# Pancreatic Cancer UK

Specialist Nurse Support Line  
Monday – Friday, 9am-4pm  
(10am-4pm on Wednesdays)

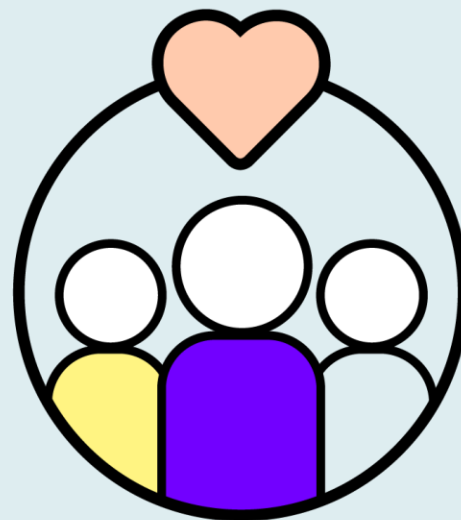
- Call 0808 801 0707
- Email on [nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk](mailto:nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk)
- WhatsApp on +44 7418 304789

Visit our website to order or download  
free information:

[www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk](http://www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk)

**What about peer-to-peer support?**





# CIRCLES



## What is Circles?

Circles are peer to peer support groups, for people like you to connect with others sharing similar experiences.



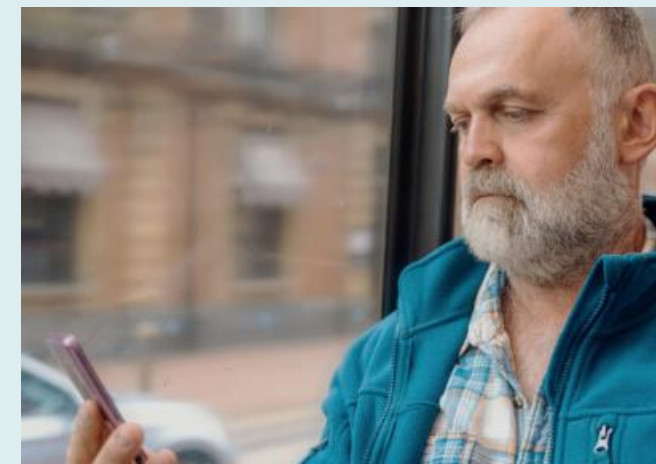
## Are the groups online?

Yes, there are groups hosted on WhatsApp and Facebook. You can choose which group you would like to join, for example, Cookery, Nutrition and Recipe sharing, Moments of Joy or The 3am Club.



## Who is in the group with me?

This will be people living with pancreatic cancer or supporting their loved one, so you can connect with others and share your experiences.



### Cookery and Recipe Sharing Group

A space for you to share cookery and recipe ideas. Tips and tricks to help with nutrition, symptoms and having the best quality of life.

Join now

*“I was scared when I was diagnosed but **Circles helped me find support from people who are experiencing similar emotions.**”*

*“It is just so good to know there are people there for you”*

# Over to you...

## ...What questions do you have for us?