

# Pancreatic cancer

## Treating symptoms and getting support



**An EasyRead Booklet**

## Contents:

This EasyRead booklet is about treating symptoms and getting support for pancreatic cancer.

There are 4 booklets in total.

- [Pancreatic cancer](#) - What is it? How is it diagnosed?
- [Pancreatic cancer](#) - Treatment if you can't have surgery
- [Pancreatic cancer](#) - Surgery to remove pancreatic cancer
- [Pancreatic cancer](#) - Treating symptoms and getting support

You can get them at: [pancreaticcancer.org.uk/easyread](http://pancreaticcancer.org.uk/easyread)

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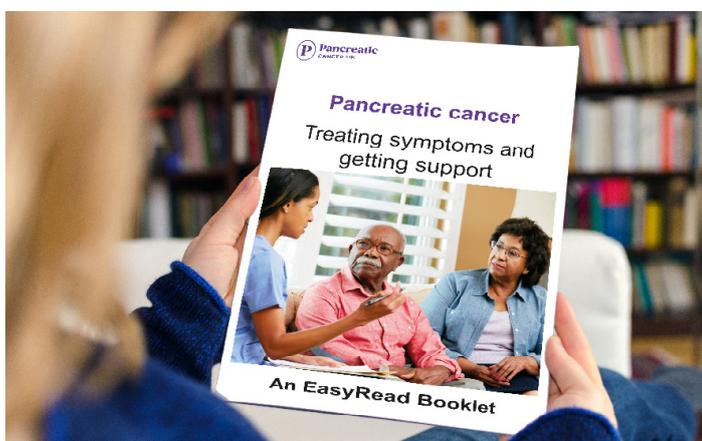
## About this booklet



This EasyRead booklet can help if you have been told you have pancreatic cancer.

It explains how to deal with some of the symptoms of pancreatic cancer.

It might also be helpful for your family and friends.



There is a lot to take in when you have pancreatic cancer.

This booklet will give you the information you need.

It also tells you how to get support to help you cope with the cancer.



If you have any questions about anything you read in this booklet, speak to your doctor or nurse.

You can also speak to one of our specialist nurses on our Support Line.



They can answer your questions and talk about your worries.

The number is **0808 801 0707**.  
It is free to call.

You can also email the nurses at:  
[nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk](mailto:nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk)

## Eating and digesting food



Pancreatic cancer can cause problems with eating and digesting food.

Your pancreas makes things called **enzymes** which help to break down the food you eat into nutrients.

These are used by your body to give you energy.

This is called **digestion**.



When you have pancreatic cancer it can stop your pancreas from making enough enzymes.

It can also block the enzymes from getting where they need to be.

This can mean that food isn't properly digested.



Symptoms of this include:

- not feeling hungry
- losing weight
- indigestion
- runny poo
- pale, oily, floating poo
- tummy feeling uncomfortable
- bloating and wind
- feeling full up really quickly
- needing to go for a poo quickly, especially after eating.

Indigestion can be a painful, burning feeling in your chest.

## What is pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT)?



If you have any of the symptoms on page 4 tell your doctor or nurse.

Your doctor or nurse can give you capsules that replace the enzymes. This is called **pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT)**.

Brands include Creon, Nutrizym and Pancrex.



The capsules will help you digest your food. They will help your symptoms.

Your doctor, nurse or dietitian will show you how to take them.



They can make a big difference to how you feel.

It can also help you cope better with treatments.



Most people with pancreatic cancer will need to take PERT.

You take the PERT capsules with your food and milky drinks.



Most people will need to take more PERT than the dose they start with.

Your dietitian, doctor or nurse can tell you how to work out the best dose of PERT for you.



If you have any questions or need more help you can call our specialist nurses on our free Support Line on **0808 801 0707**.

Or email them on [nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk](mailto:nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk)

You can read about PERT and eating on our website at: [pancreaticcancer.org.uk/diet](http://pancreaticcancer.org.uk/diet)

# Diabetes



**Diabetes** is a condition where the amount of sugar in your blood is too high.

Your pancreas makes a hormone called **insulin**. Insulin controls the amount of sugar in your blood.

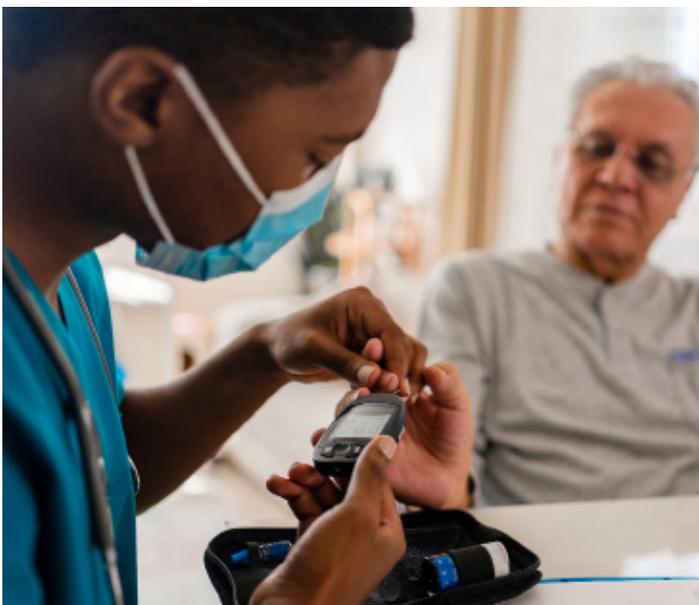
Pancreatic cancer can cause diabetes. You may also develop diabetes after surgery to remove the cancer.



If you have diabetes you should see your GP, diabetes nurse or dietitian.

They can give you treatment if you need it and help you to cope with the symptoms.

Speak to them with any questions about your diabetes.



There are different types of diabetes.

People with pancreatic cancer may have **type 3c diabetes**.

This is a less common type.

Some information about diabetes may not be right for you. Ask your doctor how to manage your diabetes.

## Other symptoms and side effects



Some of the other symptoms and side effects that you might get when you have pancreatic cancer are:

**Pain** which can start off in the tummy, then spread into the back.

You may be given treatment such as painkillers.



Pancreatic cancer can make you **feel very tired**. Try to rest when you are tired, and do things when you are less tired.

Try to do some gentle physical activity, like going for a short walk. It may make you feel better.



Pancreatic cancer and treatments can make you **feel and be sick**.

Tell your doctor or nurse.

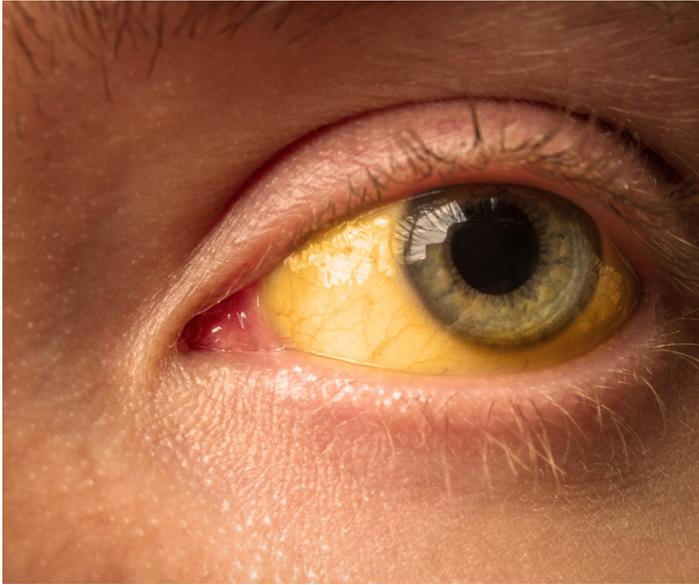
They can give you medicines to help.



**Changes to your poo** could be:

- finding it hard to have a poo (**constipation**)
- having runny poo (**diarrhoea**)
- pale, oily, floating poo (**steatorrhoea**).

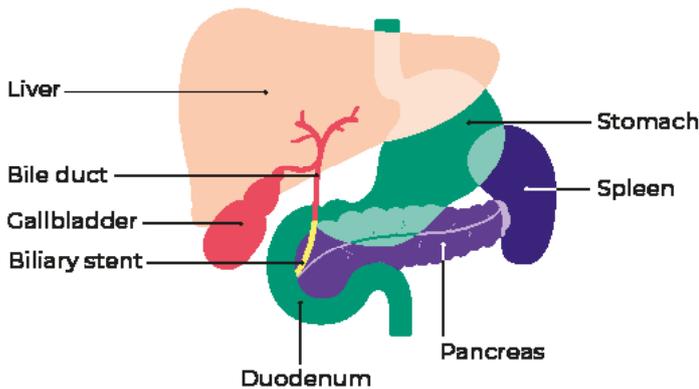
There are medicines to help with these symptoms.



If your bile duct is blocked, you may get **jaundice**.

Symptoms of jaundice are yellow skin and eyes and itching.

You may also have dark pee and pale poo.



If this happens, a small tube called a **stent** can be put into the bile duct.

The stent will unblock the bile duct and will help the jaundice.



If you have any of these symptoms or side effects tell your doctor or nurse.

They will find ways to help you.

## Care and support services in your home



You might find that you need help at home.

This can be things like help giving you medicines, treating symptoms and giving support to help you cope with your feelings.



The nurses that provide this care at home might be called:

- district nurses
- Macmillan nurses.

It depends on where you live.

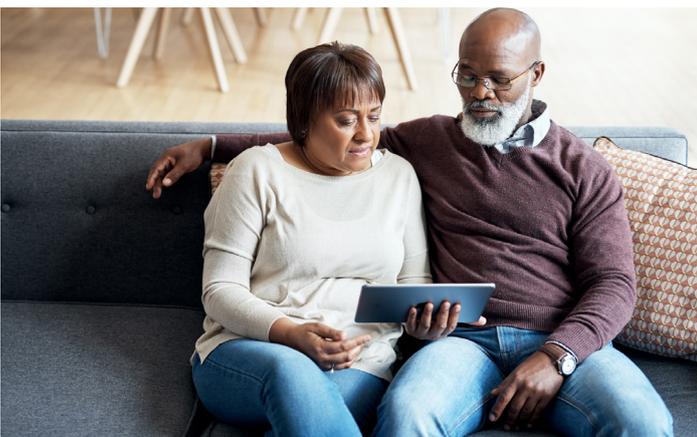
Ask your GP to arrange this if it has not been offered to you.



Practical support like help with equipment, washing and dressing may be provided by social services.

Equipment can be things like rails to help you get out of the bath.

Ask your GP or nurse about this.



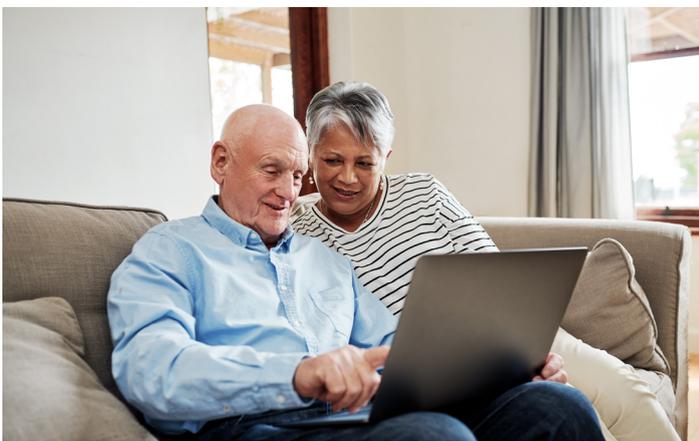
You can find out more about care and support at home on our website at:

[pancreaticcancer.org.uk/care](https://pancreaticcancer.org.uk/care)

## Coping with pancreatic cancer



Being told you have pancreatic cancer may be a big shock. You may become **anxious** (worried) and get **depression** or low mood. This is common for people with pancreatic cancer.



### What can help?

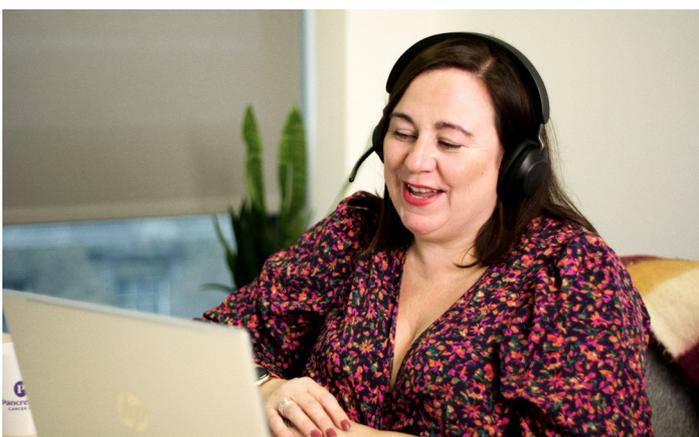
Finding more information about your cancer and the treatment you might have can help.

This will help you to make decisions about your treatment and help you to plan for the future.



Talk to your doctor or nurse and ask them questions.

Tell them if you feel worried or down. They can help you.



You can also speak to our specialist nurses on our Support Line on **0808 801 0707**. They can answer questions and give you support.

You can also email the nurses at: [nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk](mailto:nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk)



Some people find it helps to talk about their cancer and how they are feeling.

Family and friends can be a good support but sometimes people don't know what to say.



It might help to talk to other people affected by pancreatic cancer. They may understand how you feel.

We can connect you with others. Find out more at:

[pancreaticcancer.org.uk/support](https://pancreaticcancer.org.uk/support)



Charities like Macmillan Cancer Support and Maggie's Centres can also give you information and support.

They are often based at hospitals. Ask your nurse where to find them.



You can find more ways to help you cope on our website at:

[pancreaticcancer.org.uk/coping](https://pancreaticcancer.org.uk/coping)

## Practical support



There is lots of support to help you with practical things like money, work and benefits when you have pancreatic cancer.

We have listed some of them below.



Citizens Advice can give you **advice on money and any benefits** that you may be able to get. Some hospitals also have benefits advisors.

Macmillan Cancer Support also have information about money on their website.



If you find it difficult to walk you might be able to get a **blue badge**.

This means you can park in disabled spaces. Contact your local council to find out more and apply for a blue badge.



Talk to your employer about ways to keep working if you want to.

They must make **changes to support you at work**. Like changing your working hours or your duties.

Find out more from Citizens Advice.



You may be able to get **free or cheaper parking at hospitals**. Check with your hospital.



You may be able to **get your medicines for free**.

Prescriptions are free in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

If you live in England, you can apply to get your prescriptions for free if you are having cancer treatment.



This means that you won't have to pay for any medicine you need for your symptoms or side effects.

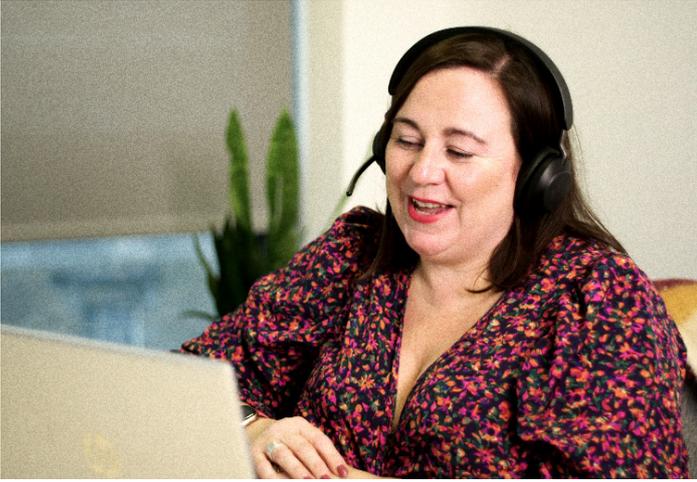
Ask your GP about this.



You can find out more about practical support on our website at:

[pancreaticcancer.org.uk/practical](https://pancreaticcancer.org.uk/practical)

## Support from us



There are lots of ways we can help you. You can speak to our specialist nurses on our Support Line.

They can answer your questions and talk about your worries.

You can call them on **0808 801 0707**. Or you can email the nurses at: [nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk](mailto:nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk)



We have lots more information about pancreatic cancer. You can read more on our website.

Go to: [pancreaticcancer.org.uk/information](https://pancreaticcancer.org.uk/information)



We have videos about pancreatic cancer.

They can help you understand your treatment and care.

Go to: [pancreaticcancer.org.uk/videos](https://pancreaticcancer.org.uk/videos)



We are here for you. If you or someone you care about has pancreatic cancer, we are here to help.

Find out all the ways we can support you. Go to: [pancreaticcancer.org.uk/support](https://pancreaticcancer.org.uk/support)

This information has been produced by the Support and Information Team at Pancreatic Cancer UK and BTM, who specialise in accessible information.

We would like to thank BTM's work groups of people with learning disabilities and everyone else who has been involved in the development and testing of these booklets.

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