Crohn’s disease and exclusive enteral nutrition

Crohn’s disease is a chronic inflammatory condition of the digestive tract. The aim of treatment is to reduce inflammation and improve symptoms.

Your gastroenterologist may prescribe you a special liquid only diet to help put the disease into remission. This diet is called exclusive enteral nutrition (EEN).

What is EEN?
Exclusive enteral nutrition is a specialised liquid nutritional formula that is taken over a period. It can sometimes be referred to as polymeric, semi-elemental or an elemental diet depending on the type of formula prescribed.

EEN meets all your nutrition needs, including vitamins and minerals. During this time, you are recommended to avoid eating or drinking anything else, other than water, as you may lose the benefits of EEN.

EEN aims to help:
- Control symptoms
- Heal the bowel
- Prevent or correct weight loss and nutrient deficiencies
- Remove foods/fluids that may be causing irritation or obstruction in your bowel.

When is EEN given?
EEN may be given when you are first diagnosed with Crohn’s disease. You may also be given EEN if you have a relapse.

How do you take EEN?
EEN can be consumed orally or be given by a nasogastric tube (a small flexible tube passed through the nose and into the stomach).

EEN comes in several flavours and can be stored safely at room temperature when unopened. Most people prefer EEN when cooled or it can be frozen and eaten.

How long will I need EEN?
Your gastroenterologist will discuss this with you. It is usually between 6-8 weeks.
Can I take any other food or fluid whilst on EEN?
It is recommended you take EEN exclusively - without any other food or fluid. You are allowed extra water to meet your hydration needs.

If you are struggling to continue the diet, your dietitian may discuss other options with you. These may include:
- Addition of flavourings to the formula
- Clear fluids
- Boiled sweets

It is recommended you have support from your family and friends to continue the diet as per your gastroenterologist and dietitian recommendations.

Cost of EEN
Your dietitian will discuss the cost of EEN with you based on your prescription.

Follow up
After EEN, normal food and drinks can be gradually reintroduced and EEN can be reduced. Your dietitian will assist you with this.

Some people may be advised to continue to consume a small volume of enteral nutrition over a longer period for nutrition support. This will be guided by your dietitian.

Dietitian recommendations:
Formula name: _____________________
_________________________________
Amount per day: _________________
_________________________________
Time to follow diet: _______________
_________________________________
Additional water: _________________
_________________________________

If you feel thirsty you should drink extra water above this recommendation, especially if exercising or working outside on hot days.