

Stopping your Proton Pump Inhibitor or “PPI”

What are PPIs?

Proton pump inhibitors, or PPIs, are medications that are used for treating stomach problems such as heartburn and ulcers. PPIs include:

- Aciphex (rabeprazole)
- Prilosec, Prilosec OTC, Zegerid OTC (omeprazole)
- Prevacid (lansoprazole)
- Nexium (esomeprazole)
- Protonix (pantoprazole)
- Dexilant (dexlansoprazole)

Why stop?

PPIs are very helpful when used in the right way. However sometimes treatment goes on for longer than is needed. New research suggests that there are serious risks of staying on a PPI for long periods of time. Some of these risks include:

- Pneumonia (lung infections)
- Intestine infections, known as C. diff
- Fractures
- Low magnesium and vitamin B12 levels



Should YOU stop?

Some people should stay on a PPI, even for long periods of time. The choice to stop a PPI needs to be made by understanding the risks and benefits for YOU. Talk to your doctor or healthcare professional about whether stopping your PPI is the right choice for you.

How will you stop?

If you have been on a PPI for a long time, you may be nervous about stopping it. Most of the time you do not need to rush to stop your PPI. Medical research shows that stopping slowly increases your chances of success.

Step 1. Get ready to stop your PPI

Certain foods and behaviors can make stomach symptoms worse. Be sure you are doing what you can to get ready. Check out our Tips for Coping with Heartburn for ideas.

Step 2. Lower your PPI dose for 2 weeks

- If you were taking one PPI pill a day, take one pill every other day.
- If you were taking two PPI pills a day, take one pill a day for a week, and then take one pill every other day for the following week.

If two weeks feels too fast, it is okay to follow this plan for a month. Use a calendar or a pill box to help you remember what to do.

Step 3. Stop your PPI

If you have stomach symptoms:

- Try an antacid, like Tums, or generic calcium carbonate for fast relief (5-15 minutes).
- Try an H2 blocker, like Zantac, or generic ranitidine, which will work in about an hour.
- Go back to Step 1 for ideas about how to manage symptoms without medications.

Be careful buying anything over-the-counter. Don't buy a PPI by mistake. Ask a pharmacist if you need help, especially if you take other medicines. Your current medicines may interact with what you are buying. If you take something for your stomach, write down the day, time, and amount you took. Bring your notes to your next healthcare visit.

Step 4. Check-in with your provider

Let your provider know if your symptoms return or if you have questions. You may only need to use an antacid or H2 blocker once in a while to control your symptoms.

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Tips for Coping with Heartburn or Reflux Disease

Changing some daily habits can help reduce or prevent stomach symptoms. Try as many of these ideas as you can to help manage your symptoms.

Avoid Foods that Trigger Heartburn

Be aware the following foods and drinks are known to trigger heartburn:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Fried/fatty foods
- Peppermint
- Chocolate
- Coffee (decaffeinated and regular)
- Citrus
- Carbonated drinks
- Spicy foods

Stop smoking

Smoking decreases sphincter pressure, letting stomach acid leak up into your esophagus. Contact the Vermont Quit Line for help online at www.vtquitnetwork.org or by phone at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669).

Avoid alcohol

Alcohol increases stomach waves and stomach contractions, letting stomach acid leak up into your esophagus.

Wear loose clothing

Tight-fitting clothes put extra pressure on your stomach and can contribute to your symptoms.

Watch your weight

Extra body weight causes pressure on your stomach which can worsen symptoms.

Eat small meals

Large meals can make your stomach too full and force stomach contents back up into the esophagus. Try eating 4 to 5 small meals during the day instead of one to two large meals.



Avoid lying down directly after eating

Don't lie down within 3 hours of eating. Lying down too soon after eating can cause the acids that are working to digest your food to flow up and cause heartburn. Plan an early dinner.

Elevate the head of your bed

If you suffer heartburn while you sleep, elevate the head of your bed at least six to eight inches with blocks and/or sleep on a foam wedge under your body. This will keep you in an upright position as you sleep, and may help to keep stomach acids from backing up.

Trustworthy websites for information

- To learn about heartburn/GERD: <http://www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/search-for-guides-reviews-and-reports/?pageaction=displayproduct&productID=756>
- To learn more about PPIs: http://www.consumerreports.org/health/best-buy-drugs/heartburn_ppi.htm
- To learn about individual medications: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html>

References

- Kahrilas PJ, et al. Gastroenterology. 2008 Oct;135(4):1383-1391. PMID: 18789939
- Detail-Document; Pharmacist's Letter 2009; 25(11):251113
- Independent Drug Information Service. Acid Suppression Therapy: Neutralizing the Hype. Available at www.rxfacts.org.