## What is a proton pump inhibitor (PPI)?

Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) are medicines which reduce the amount of acid that your stomach produces. Examples of these include omeprazole, lansoprazole, esomeprazole etc. They can stop conditions such as indigestion and acid reflux. They can also protect your stomach when you are taking long-term anti-inflammatory painkillers such as ibuprofen, naproxen, diclofenac and others.

## What are the problems with taking a PPI long term?

Long-term PPI usage may:

- Increase the risk of contracting the bowel infection Clostridioides difficile
- Increase the risk of osteoporosis (weak bones)
- Increase the risk of bone fractures
- Increase the risk of pneumonia
- Reduce the absorption of vitamin B12
- Increase the risk of falls[1]

## What is indigestion (dyspepsia)

Indigestion symptoms occur after eating or drinking and include:

- Heartburn - a painful feeling in the chest often after eating
- Feeling full and bloated
- Feeling sick
- Burping and passing wind
- Bringing up food or bitter tasting fluid into your mouth

## What is heartburn / acid reflux?

Heartburn is burning in the chest which is caused by stomach acid travelling up towards the throat (acid reflux).

The main symptoms of acid reflux are:

- Heartburn - a burning sensation in the middle of your chest
- An unpleasant sour taste in your mouth caused by stomach acid

You may also have:

- A cough or hiccups that keep coming back
- A hoarse voice
- Bad breath
- Bloating and feeling sick

## Lifestyle changes / advice to help reduce symptoms:



Elevating the head of the bed – raising the head of the bed can help to prevent stomach acid rising



Good posture – maintaining an upright position while eating can help to relieve symptoms



Avoid tight clothes around your abdomen – the pressure of tight belts, waistbands and tight clothes around the abdomen can increase pressure on the stomach, worsening acid reflux



Trying to lose weight if overweight or obese



Stopping smoking



Managing stress levels – stress can increase stomach acid production and cause muscles to tense

## Dietary advice



Eat small, regular meals



Avoid large meals



Eat meals slowly and sitting upright



Avoid caffeinated / fizzy drinks



Avoid alcohol



Avoid eating at least two hours before bed



Avoid fatty, spicy or citrus foods

## Over the counter treatments

You can buy medicines from your local pharmacy to help with indigestion symptoms; these include medicines called antacids.

These medicines work by neutralising the acid in your stomach. Many brands and types are available for example Gaviscon, Rennie, etc. The ingredients to look out for include:

- Aluminium hydroxide
- Magnesium carbonate
- Magnesium trisilicate
- Magnesium hydroxide
- Calcium carbonate
- Sodium bicarbonate

**Important:** Don't keep taking these medicines long term without speaking to a pharmacist or another healthcare professional.

Anti-inflammatory painkillers such as ibuprofen could make indigestion symptoms worse. If you take these medicines regularly, talk to a healthcare professional to check if they might be causing your symptoms.

For advice that is right for you, speak to your pharmacy team.

## When should I ask for further advice from my healthcare professional?

### You should speak to your healthcare professional if:

- Swallowing is difficult or painful
- You have unexplained weight loss

### Seek urgent medical attention if:

- You experience vomiting, especially if this contains blood or material that looks like coffee grounds
- Your bowel movements are dark and sticky
- You experience chest pain that gets worse with or after exercise or pain that goes into your chin or left shoulder, this type of pain may be a sign of a heart problem

### Further information about conditions and treatments can be found at:

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heartburn-and-acid-reflux/

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/indigestion/

***Some of the wording in this guidance has been used with thanks and permission from guidance produced by NHS HERTFORDSHIRE AND WEST ESSEX ICB***

**References**

[1] K Lapumnuaypol, C Thongprayoon, K Wijarnpreecha, A Tiu, W Cheungpasitporn, Risk of fall in patients taking proton pump inhibitors: a meta-analysis, QJM: An International Journal of Medicine, Volume 112, Issue 2, February 2019, Pages 115–121, https://doi.org/10.1093/qjmed/hcy245

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