



## Are you taking a Proton Pump Inhibitor? Read about Appropriate Uses and Safety Concerns

Examples of medications include: omeprazole (Losec), esomeprazole (Nexium), and lansoprazole (Prevacid).

Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) work by lowering the amount of acid in the stomach. PPIs treat conditions caused by too much stomach acid. Some of these conditions are heartburn or gastro-esophageal reflux disease (GERD) and ulcers.

When taken correctly PPIs are well-tolerated and very effective medications. They should be taken for the shortest time period possible (a few weeks) and at the lowest effective dosage. Although serious side effects are rare, recent research has shown that the long-term usage of PPIs may be linked to increased rates of: stroke, fractures (decreased bone density or strength), pneumonia, Clostridium Difficile (or C.diff) infection, low magnesium levels and chronic kidney disease. Anyone who has had gastrointestinal bleeding, severe inflammation in the esophagus spotted by a scope, or precancerous changes in the esophagus needs to stay on PPIs.

Please discuss the use of your PPI with your Physician or Nurse Practitioner. If they see that there is no need for you to continue taking a PPI, they may advise you to either discontinue or slowly decrease the medication over time. Rebound heartburn may temporarily occur when this is done.

In order to prevent heartburn, it is recommended to try the following strategies:

- Avoid acidic and spicy foods, mint, smoking, chocolate;
- Decrease alcohol consumption,
- Sleep with the head of the bed slightly raised and do not lie down right after a big meal,
- Find your natural set point weight range,
- Quit smoking and
- Use gentler medications such as Tums and Roloids or histamine-2 receptor blockers such as Zantac. Let your Physician or Nurse Practitioner know if you are requiring these medications frequently.

Please advise your Physician or Nurse Practitioner if you experience unexplained weight loss, black stool or trouble swallowing.

