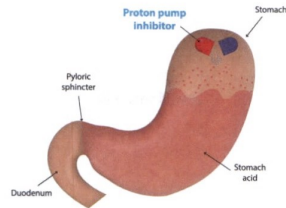


Advice for patients taking Proton Pump Inhibitors for the treatment of indigestion

Indigestion

Your stomach makes acid to help digest food but in some people the acid can irritate the stomach causing discomfort (indigestion) or a burning pain felt behind the breast bone (heartburn or reflux).



Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs)

A PPI (e.g. omeprazole, lansoprazole, esomeprazole, pantoprazole, rabeprazole) is a medicine that reduces the amount of acid that your stomach makes. By lowering the acid level, it can help to relieve the symptoms of indigestion and heartburn.

How long should I take my PPI for?

To start with, you may be given a PPI for 4 weeks. If your symptoms continue then you may be prescribed another 4-week course of treatment.

Many people find that after 4–8 weeks of taking a PPI their symptoms are better; the PPI should then be stopped as you no longer need it.

Some people with certain conditions, e.g. severe oesophagitis, strictures, Barrett's oesophagus or Zollinger–Ellison syndrome, need long-term PPI treatment. People taking medicines that can cause stomach ulcers may also need long-term PPI treatment. Your doctor will be able to tell you if you need to take a PPI long-term.

Self Help to reduce the symptoms of indigestion and heartburn

Self Help

- Stop smoking.
- Keep to a healthy weight.
- Reduce your alcohol consumption.
- Avoid food and drink that make your symptoms worse. If you're not sure what sets off your symptoms try keeping a food and symptom diary to see if you can spot any patterns.
- Eat meals at regular times.
- Do not eat too quickly.
- Avoid large or late meals.
- Avoid bending over or lying flat immediately after eating.
- If your symptoms are worse at night, try raising the head of the bed by 10–15 cm (4–6 inches) using blocks under the legs of the bed.
- Avoid medicines that can make symptoms worse.

The Healthy Routes Team can help with weight loss, stopping smoking and reducing your alcohol, contact them on 01942 489012.

<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/resident/health-social-care/healthy-routes/stop-smoking.aspx>



Although PPIs are very well tolerated in most people, no medicines are completely safe and all medicines can cause side effects.

Unwanted effects of long-term PPIs could include:

- thinning of the bones (osteoporosis),
- masking of the signs of stomach cancer,
- increased risk of infections (e.g. *Clostridium difficile* and pneumonia).

How will I stop my PPI?

Some people find that when they stop taking their PPI their symptoms seem worse, especially if they have been taking it for a long time. This is because when you take a PPI for more than a few weeks, your stomach increases its ability to make acid. This means that for a while after you stop taking your PPI, the acid levels in your stomach may be higher than before you started your treatment. To help with this, you may have your treatment 'stepped down' to one of the following options:

1. **Stop PPI.** You may be advised to stop taking your PPI and use an antacid and/or alginate if you still have symptoms. An antacid neutralises the acid in your stomach, and an alginate prevents acid flowing into your oesophagus (food pipe). These can be bought from your pharmacy. If these fail to help, you should return to see your doctor.
2. **Take PPI only when needed.** You may be advised to take your PPI only when you have symptoms. When the symptoms are relieved (often after a few days) you stop taking the PPI.
3. **Reduce PPI dose.** If you have taken your PPI for a number of months, particularly if you have been taking a high dose, your doctor may reduce your PPI dose for a few weeks before stopping completely.

What if my symptoms come back?

Indigestion and heartburn are quite common and can come and go overtime. You might find a few changes to your lifestyle or the way you eat and drink help keep your symptoms under control. If not, your pharmacist can advise on remedies you can buy.

Warning Symptoms

You should see your doctor if your symptoms do not get any better, if they get worse or if you have:

- Vomiting, especially if this contains blood or material that looks like coffee grounds;
- Dark, sticky bowel movements;
- Difficult or painful swallowing;
- Unexplained weight loss;
- Chest pain that gets worse with or after exercise, or that goes into your chin or left shoulder.

If you would like this leaflet in a different language or format (including Braille or Easy Read), please contact us on:

public@wiganboroughccg.nhs.uk. Tel: 01942 482711

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