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Proton Pump Inhibitors for Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)

Examples

Generic Name	Brand Name
dexlansoprazole	Dexilant
esomeprazole	Nexium
lansoprazole	Prevacid
omeprazole	Prilosec, Zegerid
pantoprazole	Protonix
rabeprazole	Aciphex

These medicines are taken by mouth (as a pill or liquid) once or twice a day. Some of these drugs are given intravenously (IV) in the hospital.

Some of these medicines are available without a prescription. But if you have been using Prilosec OTC to treat your symptoms for longer than 2 weeks, talk to your doctor. If you have GERD, it could be causing damage to your esophagus. Your doctor can help you find the right treatment.

How It Works

Proton pump inhibitors reduce the production of acid in the stomach. This leaves little acid in the stomach juice so that if stomach juice backs up into the esophagus, it is less irritating. This allows the esophagus to heal.

Why It Is Used

Proton pump inhibitors are usually used:

- To prevent GERD symptoms.
- To heal inflammation of the esophagus (esophagitis).
- To prevent esophagitis from coming back after the esophagus is healed (maintenance therapy) and to prevent complications of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).

People with Barrett's esophagus are often treated with proton pump inhibitors.

How Well It Works

Proton pump inhibitors also work to help symptoms of GERD. But the number of people who take PPIs and who have no GERD symptoms is usually less than 5 out of 10 people. That means that of the people taking PPIs, more than 5 out of 10 still

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have some GERD symptoms.

Proton pump inhibitors work best when they are taken 30 minutes before your first meal of the day. If taking one pill before your first meal does not completely relieve your symptoms, talk to your doctor about taking another pill before your evening meal.

Side Effects

All medicines have side effects. But many people don't feel the side effects, or they are able to deal with them. Ask your pharmacist about the side effects of each medicine you take. Side effects are also listed in the information that comes with your medicine.

Here are some important things to think about:

- ❖ Usually the benefits of the medicine are more important than any minor side effects.
- ❖ Side effects may go away after you take the medicine for a while.
- ❖ If side effects still bother you and you wonder if you should keep taking the medicine, **call your doctor**. He or she may be able to lower your dose or change your medicine. Do not suddenly quit taking your medicine unless your doctor tells you to.

Call 911 or other emergency services right away if you have:

- ❖ Trouble breathing.
- ❖ Swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Call your doctor if you have:

- ❖ Diarrhea that gets worse or lasts longer than a few days.
- ❖ Hives.
- ❖ Skin rash or itching.

See Drug Reference for a full list of side effects. (Drug Reference is not available in all systems.)

What To Think About

Proton pump inhibitors work best when they are taken 30 minutes before your first meal (for example, breakfast). If taking one pill before breakfast does not completely relieve your symptoms, talk to your doctor about taking another pill before dinner.

It may take a few days for proton pump inhibitors to help your symptoms. You can take antacids to help with your symptoms during this time, unless your doctor has told you not to.

Taking medicine

Medicine is one of the many tools your doctor has to treat a health problem. Taking medicine as your doctor suggests will improve your health and may prevent future problems. If you don't take your medicines properly, you may be putting your health (and perhaps your life) at risk.

There are many reasons why people have trouble taking their medicine. But in most cases, there is something you can do. For suggestions on how to work around common problems, see the topic [Taking Medicines as Prescribed](#).

Advice for women

If you are pregnant, breast-feeding, or planning to get pregnant, do not use any medicines unless your doctor tells you to. Some medicines can harm your baby. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbs, and supplements. And make sure that all your doctors know that you are pregnant, breast-feeding, or planning to get pregnant.

Checkups

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Complete the [new medication information form \(PDF\)](#) to help you understand this medication.

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Last Updated: May 10, 2012

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Further Reading:

- Slideshow: A Visual Guide to Understanding Heartburn and GERD
- The Esophagus (Human Anatomy): Picture, Function, Conditions, and More
- What is esophagitis?
- Peptic Ulcer Disease-Surgery
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