

My Doctor Started Me on a Proton Pump Inhibitor (PPI). What now?

PROTON PUMP INHIBITORS

The proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) include: esomeprazole (Nexium), lansoprazole (Prevacid), omeprazole (Prilosec), pantoprazole (Protonix), rabeprazole (Aciphex), dexolanzoprazole (Dexilant) and omeprazole powder (Zegerid). With regard to the optimal way to take a proton pump inhibitor, you should take your medication half an hour before a meal, usually before breakfast if you have been prescribed this medication once a day. Most other pills can be taken along with PPI's, except for antacids, carafate, and questran. Antacids, Carafate® and Questran® bind almost everything they come in contact with, so, if you are on these medicines, you should not be taking them at the same time as other medicines in the first place!

PPIs work by turning off the cellular pumps in your stomach that make acid. Eating food 20 to 60 minutes after taking your pill on an empty stomach activates millions of these acid pumps which are then turned off by the medication. This is the key for optimal dosing of a PPI.

Like any medication, herbal supplement or vitamin, PPIs can have side effects in a minority of individuals. If you have any new symptoms on starting a medication, call the office immediately. Overall, PPIs are safe enough to be over the counter. Even though it blocks the secretion of acid in the stomach, interference with absorption of nutrients is rare. Recent reports of risk for osteoporosis, heart disease, kidney disease and cognitive decline have not yet been supported by randomized controlled trials or conclusive evidence demonstrating causation. If your physician believes you should take a PPI, he/she has determine that the benefits outweigh risks for your particular condition, however it is useful to periodically review your symptoms and health status with your physician over time to determine if dose reductions or changes in therapy are appropriate.

If you have complications from acid reflux such as strictures or Barretts disease, you may be recommended to take PPIs lifelong. Otherwise, our goal is to bring you down to the lowest effective dose. With diet and lifestyle changes, many patients can wean off these medications and remain symptom free. If you have been symptom-free and have not recently discussed reducing your dose of these medications with your doctor, we encourage you to bring it up during your next visit.