

Medicines for heartburn and reflux

Your doctor has prescribed you one of a group of medicines called proton pump inhibitors.

Proton pump inhibitors are medicines which reduce the amount of acid that the stomach makes. This can allow inflammation of the oesophagus (food pipe) to heal and help relieve the symptoms of heartburn and reflux. They can also treat and help heal gastric ulcers (ulcers in the stomach) or duodenal ulcers (ulcers in the duodenum - the tube leading out of the stomach). Proton pump inhibitors do not stop you digesting food in the normal way.

You are taking one of the medicines listed below.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Active ingredient	Brand names
<input type="checkbox"/> esomeprazole	Nexium
<input type="checkbox"/> lansoprazole	Zoton
<input type="checkbox"/> omeprazole	Acimax, Losec, Meprazol, Omepral, Probitor
<input type="checkbox"/> pantoprazole	Somac
<input type="checkbox"/> rabeprazole	Pariet

Proton pump inhibitors are very effective medicines, however it can take several days for their full effect to be felt. Some people find that using an antacid for a day or two helps relieve heartburn and reflux symptoms when they first start taking a proton pump inhibitor.



If symptoms continue you should see your doctor.

If your doctor has prescribed lansoprazole (Zoton), it is recommended that you wait at least one hour after taking lansoprazole (Zoton) before you use an antacid.

How long will I need to take this medicine for?

How long you need to take a proton pump inhibitor for will depend on why your doctor has prescribed it. They can be used for a number of different medical conditions. Continue to take your medicine for as long as your doctor tells you to.

Starting your medicine

To start with, you may be given a prescription for 4–8 weeks. This should help to relieve your symptoms and allow healing to take place.

If your symptoms are better after this time, you may be able to have your treatment ‘stepped down’. You may be able to:

- stop taking the proton pump inhibitor
- use a lower dose
- manage your symptoms by using the medicine only on the days that you have symptoms.

These options are not suitable for everybody.

If your symptoms are well controlled and you think you may be able to have your treatment ‘stepped down’, talk to your doctor. It is very important to speak to your doctor before making any changes to the way you take your medicine.

Some patients will need to use this medicine long term

People with certain conditions such as severe oesophagitis, strictures, scleroderma, Barrett’s oesophagus or Zollinger–Ellison syndrome need long-term treatment with a proton pump inhibitor.

People using a medicine that can cause gastric or duodenal ulcers may take a proton pump inhibitor to help prevent an ulcer developing. In this case, the proton pump inhibitor is used for the same period of time as the medicine that can cause the ulcer.

Do these medicines have any side effects?

Proton pump inhibitors are well tolerated by most people. Headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, constipation and flatulence are the most common side effects. More serious side effects, such as kidney problems are rare.

Ask your pharmacist or doctor for a copy of the consumer medicine information (CMI) leaflet for more information about possible side effects for your medicine.

What about other medicines?

Other medicines including medicines that you buy without a prescription from your pharmacy, supermarket or health food shop may be affected by a proton pump inhibitor or may affect how it works. Medicines used to prevent blood clots (warfarin) may be affected. Medicines that depend on the amount of acid in the stomach to work may not work as well. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new medicines.

Can I do anything to improve my reflux or heartburn symptoms?

- Avoid food and drinks that make your symptoms worse (for example, spicy foods, fatty foods, chocolate, coffee, cola drinks and orange juice may make your heartburn symptoms worse).
- Avoid large or late meals and avoid lying down immediately after meals.
- If you experience heartburn symptoms that are worse at night and disrupt your sleep, try raising the head of your bed.
- If you drink more than two standard drinks of alcohol a day, reduce the amount you drink.
- If you are overweight, try losing some weight.
- Stop smoking. Discuss with your doctor or pharmacist ways to quit, or call the Quitline 13 QUIT (13 7848). Plan your quit date.
- Ask your pharmacist or doctor to review your medicines to make sure that none of your other medicines could be making your symptoms worse.

Record your symptoms until your next doctor's appointment.

What should I do if I develop problems?

See your doctor if your symptoms do not get better, or get worse or if you develop any of the following problems:

- vomiting, especially if you vomit blood or material that looks like coffee grounds
- dark, sticky bowel motions
- difficult or painful swallowing
- unexplained weight loss.
- chest pain, chest pain that gets worse with or after exercise or chest pain that goes into your chin or left shoulder. These may be signs of a heart problem.

For more information on your medicine

Ask your pharmacist or doctor for a copy of the **Consumer Medicine Information (CMI)** leaflet for your medicine or search online at www.nps.org.au/consumers.

Call **Medicines Line 1300 888 763 (Monday to Friday 9am – 6pm EST)** for independent information on your medicines.

Other resources

Download or order free resources from National Prescribing Service Limited at nps.org.au/order_free_information or order on 02 8217 8700.

Medicines List – a sheet for you to record your medicines

Fact sheets – including, What is a medicine? Generic medicines, Remembering your medicines

Medimate – helps you find, understand and use information about medicines (in 5 languages)

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This leaflet may be printed for patient use.



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ABN 61 082 034 393 | Level 7/418A Elizabeth Street Surry Hills NSW 2010 | PO Box 1147 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012
Phone: 02 8217 8700 | Fax: 02 9211 7578 | email: info@nps.org.au | web: www.nps.org.au