

Treatment of indigestion with Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs)

Patient Information including lifestyle advice and advice for stopping or stepping down PPI treatment for indigestion.

What are Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs)?

PPIs are a type of medicine which reduce the amount of acid your stomach makes. Having less acid can help ease the symptoms of indigestion. Indigestion is also known as heartburn, dyspepsia, or acid reflux. There are a number of PPIs available: for example, omeprazole, lansoprazole, pantoprazole and esomeprazole which all suppress acid production. Having a little acid in the stomach long term however is a good thing, rather than none at all.

Not everyone with indigestion needs a PPI. Some people are prescribed PPI for other reasons such as to protect the stomach when they are prescribed anti-inflammatories or some other medications, or to treat medical problems such as Barrett's oesophagus or oesophageal stricture. **This information sheet assumes that you have been medically assessed and have been prescribed a PPI for indigestion only and no other reason.**

How long should I take the treatment dose of a PPI?

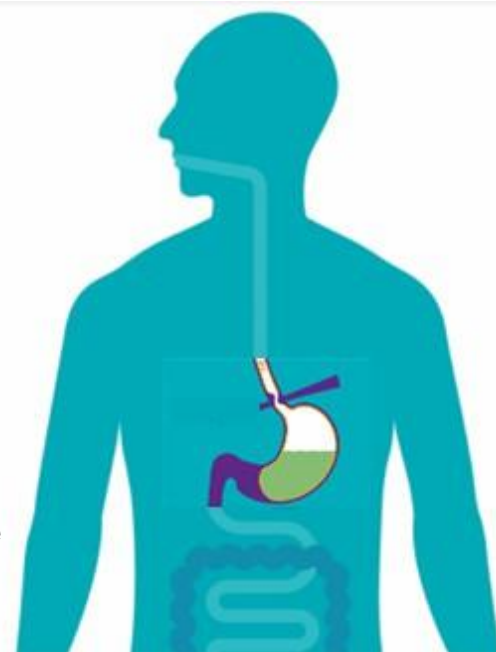
PPIs are usually prescribed for four to eight weeks for indigestion symptoms. They should be taken for as short a time as possible to avoid long-term side effects of acid suppression, which include:

- Increasing the risk of infections including in the bowel (*Clostridium difficile*) and lungs (pneumonia)
- Reducing the absorption of important vitamins and minerals including magnesium, vitamin B12 and calcium.
- Increased risk (10-40%) of bone fractures after prolonged use especially the elderly.

In some instances, long-term PPIs are necessary but the dose may change to a lower maintenance dose. Your GP practice will advise if you are not sure.

For further information please see the:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/stomach-liver-and-gastrointestinal-tract/indigestion/#treating-indigestion>



If: your indigestion does not go away after two to four weeks; you are vomiting for no obvious reason; have blood in your vomit; find swallowing painful or difficult; are losing weight for no obvious reason; or notice dark or black poo; please contact your GP surgery as soon as you can, especially if you are 55 years or older.

Stopping and stepping down PPIs when taken for indigestion only (not Barretts oesophagus or strictures)

Your dose of PPI may be changed by your GP practice to ensure that you are on the lowest dose possible for the least amount of time. This may include the following:

- Your PPI dose may be reduced
- Your PPI may **only need to be taken when required** for indigestion symptoms
- Your PPI may be stopped

When you step down or stop your PPI, your indigestion symptoms can return temporarily, sometimes worse than before. These symptoms usually settle after two to four weeks of stopping the PPI, and can be managed with an antacid or alginate. Your pharmacist or GP practice will be able to advise you.

Reducing the risk of indigestion in the future

After you finish your PPI course it is important to reduce the risk of your indigestion returning through self help - you can do this by considering lifestyle factors below. For more patient information about indigestion, its causes and how you can manage your symptoms, please visit

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/stomach-liver-and-gastrointestinal-tract/indigestion>

Lifestyle factors can ease the symptoms, so you can help by:



Managing stress through exercise and relaxation



Avoiding skipping meals



Avoiding large meals



Keeping to a healthy weight



Stopping smoking



Avoiding spicy or fatty food



Avoiding caffeine - coffee, tea and chocolate



Avoiding acidic, carbonated and energy drinks (orange juice, cola)



Avoiding tight clothing



Raising the head of your bed by 10-20 cm



Taking your time eating meals



Avoiding eating or drinking for 2-3 hours before bed



Avoiding hot drinks or food



Avoiding alcohol



It's also important to note that some medicines may cause indigestion or make it worse, including anti-inflammatories like ibuprofen

Cheshire and Merseyside NHS has played a key role in producing the educational content of this leaflet

If you need this information in a different language or format, please contact Patient Services via email: dg.patient-information@nhs.scot