

**AARP** | *Walgreens*

*Smarter. Stronger. Healthier.*



## MANAGING **Acid Reflux**

GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE—GERD

**KNOW YOUR Rx OPTIONS**

Proton pump inhibitors

This brochure gives you information about acid reflux and some of the prescription medicines commonly used to manage it. You will learn how these medicines compare and get important information about side effects and safety. You'll also receive self-care tips to help you feel better.

## What is GERD?

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) happens when stomach acid backs up into the esophagus, the tube that leads from the throat to the stomach. The main symptom of GERD is heartburn. It may feel like a burning, warmth, or pain just behind your breastbone. You also may have a sour or bitter taste in your mouth. GERD sometimes is called acid reflux.

Some people have GERD without heartburn. Other signs that you might have GERD are chest pain, a hoarse voice in the morning, trouble swallowing, a feeling that you have something stuck in your throat, or a dry cough.

Not everyone with these symptoms has GERD. Many people have symptoms like these after they eat too much or when they bend forward after eating. But if you have heartburn more than 2 times a week, see your doctor. You may have GERD, and GERD that is not treated can cause ulcers that damage your esophagus.

GERD is often a lifelong condition, but lifestyle changes and medicine help many people. If your GERD is severe, surgery may be needed.



### More information

For more on GERD, changing your lifestyle to manage GERD, and deciding whether to use medicine, go to [www.aarp.org/rxoptions](http://www.aarp.org/rxoptions) and enter code **P007** in the search box, or select the code from the drop-down menu next to the search box.

## What can I do to help myself?

The symptoms of GERD can be painful and can keep you from doing things you want to do. Although GERD often can't be cured, you can take steps to ease your symptoms and make yourself more comfortable.

### Quit tobacco use

If you smoke or chew tobacco, stop. The nicotine from tobacco can make heartburn more likely. Talk to your doctor about quitting tobacco. Your doctor may be able to recommend a stop-smoking program or prescribe medicine that can help you.

### Change your eating habits

Certain foods can make the symptoms of GERD more likely. These foods may include chocolate, fatty and fried foods, garlic, onions, mint-flavored foods, spicy foods, tomato-based foods like spaghetti sauce and pizza, and citrus fruits such as lemons and limes. Alcohol, coffee, tea, and cola drinks also may cause GERD symptoms.

Try to eat smaller, more frequent meals, and don't eat just before bedtime. If you are overweight, try to lose weight. Extra weight puts more pressure on your stomach and makes it more likely you will have heartburn. Losing even a few pounds can help.



## Other things you can do

Wait 2 to 3 hours after eating before you lie down. When you are lying down, the contents of your stomach can push into your esophagus. Sitting up helps food and stomach acid stay in your stomach.

Raise the head of your bed 6 to 8 inches to help keep stomach acid from flowing into your esophagus when you are sleeping. You can do this by putting blocks under the head of your bed frame or placing a foam wedge under the head of your mattress. Don't use extra pillows to raise yourself. This will not help your symptoms.

Don't wear tight clothing over your stomach. Tight belts, waistbands, and panty hose may push against your stomach and make your heartburn worse.

Use care when you lift and bend over. These actions can force stomach acid into your esophagus. When you lift, bend at the knees, not at the waist.



## Which medicines treat GERD?

Your doctor first may suggest that you take antacids, like Gaviscon, Mylanta, Rolaids, or Tums. Antacids are for fast-acting relief of symptoms and usually are used for people who rarely have symptoms.

Over-the-counter (OTC) medicine that reduces or blocks stomach acid also may be used. These medicines include H2 blockers such as famotidine (Pepcid AC) and proton pump inhibitors such as omeprazole (Prilosec OTC). H2 blockers and proton pump inhibitors both reduce how much acid the stomach makes.

Your doctor also may suggest prescription H2 blockers, such as famotidine (Pepcid) or ranitidine (Zantac). H2 blockers usually are for more mild symptoms of GERD. They usually are taken at least twice a day.

If the H2 blockers don't help your symptoms, your doctor may suggest prescription proton pump inhibitors, such as esomeprazole (Nexium) or omeprazole (Prilosec). They are taken once a day.

Proton pump inhibitors are stronger medicines than H2 blockers and are more likely to be used if you have GERD symptoms more than 2 days a week.

## What are some common proton pump inhibitors?

The table below lists some common proton pump inhibitors. Not all proton pump inhibitors are listed. Your doctor may have prescribed a proton pump inhibitor not listed here based on your symptoms and needs.

If you worry about the cost of medicine, tell your doctor. He or she may be able to suggest a less expensive medicine for you.

Brand name	Generic name	Generic available?
Proton pump inhibitors available OTC		
Prilosec OTC	omeprazole	Yes
Proton pump inhibitors available by prescription		
Nexium	esomeprazole	No
Prevacid	lansoprazole	No
Prilosec	omeprazole	Yes
Zegerid	omeprazole and sodium bicarbonate	No
Protonix	pantoprazole	No
Aciphex	rabeprazole	No



## What are generic medicines?

All medicines contain an active ingredient, which is the same as the generic name. The active ingredient is what makes the medicine “work.”

## What is a brand name?

When drug companies develop a new medicine, they patent it so no one else can make it or sell it for a certain amount of time. The brand name is the name the drug company gives to the medicine. It is the first name most people hear for a medicine because of advertising in magazines and on television.

## But I've heard more than one brand name, haven't I?

After a medicine patent expires, other companies can make and sell the medicine. Sometimes these companies call it by the generic name, the name of the active ingredient. But companies also can give it their own brand names.

This means a medicine made with one active ingredient can have many names.

For example:

- Omeprazole is the active ingredient and generic name for one proton pump inhibitor.
- Prilosec and Prilosec OTC are both brand names for omeprazole.

## Are brand-name medicines better than generic medicines?

Generic medicines work the same way brand-name medicines work, but they usually cost less. Your doctor may be able to prescribe a generic medicine if it's available and right for you.

A generic medicine may be available for some forms of a medicine, but not for others.

# Are some proton pump inhibitors better than others?

Is one medicine really more effective than another? The Drug Effectiveness Review Project (DERP)\* tries to answer that question.

Research on all the proton pump inhibitors listed in the table on page 6 has been reviewed. Some DERP findings are listed below.\*\*

- Proton pump inhibitors work much the same in treating the symptoms of GERD and in preventing symptoms from coming back.
- Proton pump inhibitors don't work any differently based on your gender, age, or race or on whether you have other medical conditions.
- None of these medicines is better than the others when it comes to side effects.

\*DERP ([www.ohsu.edu/drugeffectiveness](http://www.ohsu.edu/drugeffectiveness)) began in 2001 when the state of Oregon started funding research on the effectiveness and safety of comparable drugs. Since then, other states and nonprofits have joined with Oregon to fund and use the research. DERP does not accept funding from drug companies.

\*\*All evidence-based DERP reports can be found at [www.ohsu.edu/drugeffectiveness/reports/final.cfm](http://www.ohsu.edu/drugeffectiveness/reports/final.cfm). DERP has not reviewed the content of this brochure.

# What do I need to know?

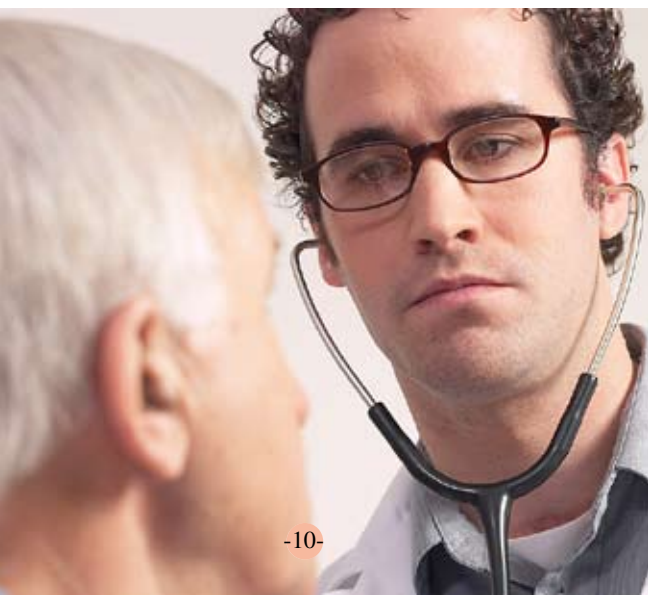
## Taking proton pump inhibitors

- You may need to try different medicines or a combination of medicines before finding what works best. You also may have to change how much or how often you take the medicine.
- You may not have to take medicine for GERD all the time. You may only need it when you have symptoms. If you have severe GERD symptoms that don't go away, talk to your doctor about how long you may need to take medicine and other ways you can treat GERD.
- As you make lifestyle changes, your symptoms may get better. Talk with your doctor to see if you can stop taking the medicine.
- Always take these medicines as your doctor tells you. They work best when you take them as your doctor says.
- You most likely will have to take the medicine for a few days before you get the most benefit.
- If it is hard for you to swallow a capsule, you can open a capsule and put the medicine in soft food. But if you use tablets, don't crush, break, or chew them. Doing so may change how well the medicine works.
- Proton pump inhibitors work best when taken 30 minutes before a meal.



## Safety

- If you are over age 50 and have GERD symptoms, you may need a test to check for a condition known as Barrett's esophagus. This is a change in the cells that line your esophagus, which may make cancer of the esophagus more likely.
- Your doctor may prescribe both proton pump inhibitors and H2 blockers. Don't take these medicines at the same time because they interact.
- Always talk to your doctor or pharmacist before you take another medicine for GERD or for an ulcer.
- Some proton pump inhibitors have been in use for years, and they are approved for long-term use in Canada, Europe, and the United States. But some doctors have concerns about their long-term use, because the risks are not known. If you are taking this medicine long-term, check with your doctor regularly about your dose and whether to keep using it.
- Keep all medicines out of the reach of children.



## What about side effects?

All medicines have side effects. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about what side effects to expect when you take proton pump inhibitors. Ask if there are any serious side effects you should report to your doctor.

Usually the benefits of the medicine are more important than minor side effects. But if side effects continue to bother you and you are wondering whether you should continue to take the medicine, call your doctor.

### Possible side effects

Most people who take proton pump inhibitors have few side effects. You might notice stomach pain, constipation, diarrhea, or headache. These side effects usually decrease as your body gets used to the medicine.





## **Serious side effects**

**Call your doctor or 911 right away or go to the emergency room if you have any of the following rare side effects:**

- You have a hard time breathing, get hives, or have swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat. These are signs of an allergic reaction.

## **How can I manage my medicines?**

### **Avoid side effects and interactions**

Medicines are more likely to interact, cause side effects, or harm you if:

- You are taking high doses.
- You have another health problem.
- Your health or a health problem you have is not stable (is changing).
- You are taking many medicines that your body processes in a similar way.

The best way to manage your medicines and help your doctor, pharmacist, or other health care professional is to keep a personal medication record (PMR).

The PMR gives you a place to list all the medicines you take, the doses, and how they are taken. This includes over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements. Sharing this list with your health care providers will help you avoid drug interactions.

You also can put all your medicines in a bag and take them with you when you see your doctor. Include all supplements, herbs, vitamins, and minerals you are taking.

Using one pharmacy makes drug interactions less likely. The pharmacist will know which medicines you are taking and watch for interactions. Some pharmacies will keep your PMR up to date for you.



## Work with your doctor and pharmacist

Here are some questions you can ask:

- What is the name of this medicine? What does it do? What are the side effects? What should I do if I forget to take it?
- When do I start and stop taking this medicine? How do I take it? How should I store it?
- At what time do I take this medicine? Should I take this medicine before meals, after meals, with meals, or on an empty stomach? Should I avoid certain foods or drinks with this medicine?
- Will this medicine work safely with other medicines I am taking?
- Can I do anything instead of or along with taking my medicine to help my symptoms?
- Is there another medicine I can use? Does it work well, and is it safe? Is there a generic or less expensive medicine I can take?



### More information

Go to [www.aarp.org/rxoptions](http://www.aarp.org/rxoptions) and enter code **L882** in the search box, or select the code from the drop-down menu next to the search box. You'll get more information on working with your doctor and forms to help you manage your medicine.



## **AARP and Walgreens: Knowledge You Can Trust**

AARP and Walgreens are working together to put adults 50 and over in charge of their medicine, health, and lives. Through this alliance, AARP and Walgreens will work together to ensure that Americans 50+ have the tools that they need to take greater control of their health. A primary focus of the alliance will be to help educate the nation's 50+ population about the wise use of medicines.

### **Know Your Rx Options brochures**

- Acid Reflux (GERD)
- Allergic Rhinitis
- Chronic Pain
- Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease
- High Blood Pressure
- High Cholesterol
- Insomnia
- Nausea and Vomiting
- Osteoarthritis
- Urinary Incontinence

Visit the AARP-Walgreens Alliance Web site at  
**[www.aarp.org/walgreens](http://www.aarp.org/walgreens)**.

All material contained herein is provided for informational purposes only and should not be construed as medical advice or instruction. Consult your medical provider for advice relating to treatment of a medical problem or condition. Drugs mentioned in this brochure may be trademarks of their respective owners/ companies.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce *AARP The Magazine*, published bimonthly; *AARP Bulletin*, our monthly newspaper; *AARP Segunda Juventud*, our bimonthly magazine in Spanish and English; *NRTA Live & Learn*, our quarterly newsletter for 50+ educators; and our Web site, AARP.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Founded in 1901, Walgreen Co. has been a leader in providing innovative, high quality and convenient healthcare services and consumer goods for over 105 years. Today there are over 6,000 Walgreens located across the USA and Puerto Rico, many with Drive-Thru pharmacy service, One Hour photofinishing and printer cartridge refills. Over 1,600 Walgreens are open 24-hours a day, seven days a week to provide service when it's most needed. At Walgreens.com, customers have access to digital photo services, a complete health library, Care Giver resources, online prescription refill ordering and much more.



**[www.aarp.org/walgreens](http://www.aarp.org/walgreens)**

AARP 601 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20049  
1-888-OUR-AARP  
(1-888-687-2277)



© Copyright 2007, Healthwise, Incorporated. All rights reserved. This information is not intended to replace the advice of a doctor. Healthwise disclaims any liability for your use of this information.