**Dyspepsia**

The main symptom of dyspepsia or indigestion is pain or discomfort in the stomach.

**Heartburn**

Another symptom of dyspepsia is heartburn (acid reflux). This is a burning feeling which rises from the upper stomach or lower chest towards the neck.

**Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs)**

PPIs (omeprazole, lansoprazole, pantoprazole, esomeprazole, rabeprazole) can help to relieve the symptoms of indigestion and heartburn; by reducing the amount of acid which your stomach makes, by lowering the acid level.

**How long should you take a PPI for?**

This will depend on why you are taking it, as they can be used for a number of different conditions.

People with certain conditions such as severe oesphagitis, strictures, Barrett’s oesophagus or Zollinger-Ellison Syndrome, need long-term PPI treatment.

Your doctor will be able to tell you if you have a condition which requires you to take a PPI long-term.

People taking medication which can cause peptic (stomach) ulcers may also require long-term treatment with a PPI.

**Starting your Medication**

To start with, you may be given a prescription for four weeks. If your symptoms continue then you may be prescribed another four weeks of treatment.

Many people find that after this time, their symptoms are better. However, it is common for symptoms to come back again, sometimes after a number of months.

**Long-term Management**

After you have finished a course of PPI treatment, you may have your treatment ‘stepped down’ to one of the following options:

- **Reduced dose** - Your doctor may reduce the PPI to a lower dose or prescribe a different medicine to keep your symptoms away.

- **Take the PPI only when needed** - You may be advised to take your PPI only when you have symptoms. When the symptoms are relieved, normally after a few days, you stop taking the PPI.

- **Stop PPI** - You may be advised to use an antacid or alginate when you experience symptoms. If this fails to help, you should discuss this with your doctor.

If you have been taking a PPI for more than eight weeks at a high dose, your doctor may advise taking a lower dose for a few weeks before stopping completely.

**Stopping or reducing your PPI**

Some people find that when they stop or reduce the dose of their PPI their symptoms are worse than before. This can be a particular problem if you have taken a PPI for a long time. This is because if you do take a PPI for more than a few weeks, your stomach will increase its ability to make acid.
This means that for a while after you stop or reduce the dose of your PPI, the acid levels in your stomach may be higher than before you started your treatment.

If you have symptoms when you stop your PPI or when the dose is reduced, ask your doctor or pharmacist for a type of medication (indigestion remedy) called an antacid or alginate.

An antacid or alginate can help until your acid levels return to normal. For most people acid levels return to normal within one to two weeks.

**What should I do if I develop problems?**

You should see your doctor if your symptoms do not get any better, get worse, or if you develop any of the following:

- Vomiting, especially if this contains blood or material that looks like coffee grounds;
- Dark, sticky bowel movements;
- Unexplained weight loss; or
- Chest pain, that gets worse with or after exercise or chest pain that goes into your chin or left shoulder. This may be a sign of a heart problem.

**Can I do anything to improve my symptoms?**

- Try to keep to a healthy weight.
- Avoid food and drink that make your symptoms worse for example, spicy or fatty foods, chocolate, coffee, cola drinks and orange juice.
- Avoid large or late meals and avoid bending over or lying flat immediately after eating.
- Eat meals at regular times.
- Avoid tight belts or restrictive clothing.
- Avoid buying medications that could make your symptoms worse, such as some types of painkillers. Always ask your doctor or pharmacist which medications are safe to take.
- If your symptoms are worse at night and disrupt your sleep, try raising the head of your bed by 10-15cm or use a wedge shaped pillow to raise your head.
- If you drink more than two standard units of alcohol a day, think about reducing the amount you drink.

**Stop Smoking:**

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