

# Heartburn, Stomach Acid Drugs—Proton Pump Inhibitors

With the growing number of new drugs, it's more difficult to decide which medication best fits an individual's needs. And, with a wide variation in the cost of drugs used to treat the same medical problem, such as ulcers and heartburn, it's hard to judge whether a higher priced drug is better or not.

There are many proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) used to treat heartburn, acid-reflux disease, and peptic ulcers. PPIs treat excess acid in the stomach or esophagus. They do this by decreasing the amount of acid produced by cells that line the stomach.

If you and your doctor decide that taking a proton pump inhibitor is the best choice to reduce problems caused by too much stomach acid, you still need to decide which one to take.

Rising costs of drugs concern all of us. High prices affect you whether paying cash, paying with private insurance, or paying taxes for health services. Knowing the most effective and least costly drugs can cut costs.

Not all drugs are available as a generic. Many drugs are patent protected and sold only as a brand name. Only omeprazole (Prilosec) is available generically at this time. If your prescription is not available generically, ask if an alternative generic drug or an OTC drug may be appropriate for you.

## Proton Pump Inhibitor Drugs

<u>Brand Name</u>	<u>Generic Name</u>	<u>Generic Available</u>	<u>Average Price for 30-day Supply</u>
Nexium		No	\$151
Prevacid		No	\$146
Prilosec	omeprazole	Yes	\$137 Brand/\$90 Generic
Prilosec OTC	omeprazole	Yes	\$22
Protonix		No	\$115
Aciphex		No	\$155

### Ask Your Health Care Practitioner During Your Next Visit

- Am I taking the most effective drug for my condition?*
- Are alternative drugs available that are equally effective?*
- Are alternative drugs available that are effective, but less costly?*
- Is there a generic available for my brand name drug?*
- Will this drug interact with other medication I take?*

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# The Most Effective Drugs At the Best Price

## What Do These Drugs Have in Common?

- No proton pump inhibitor (PPI) is better than another. There is no evidence that shows a difference among PPIs in healing esophagitis or relieving the signs of gastro-esophageal reflux disease (GERD) and preventing return of the symptoms. There is no evidence that any PPI is superior in treating peptic ulcers, ulcers caused by other drugs, or ulcers caused by H. pylori infections.
- No major differences exists among PPIs for side effects.
- PPIs are equally effective in men and women. No differences in effectiveness or side effects exist among PPIs based on race, ethnicity, age, or presence of other diseases.
- Nonprescription Prilosec OTC is just as likely as prescription PPIs to relieve heartburn and ulcers, and promote healing for most people with gastro-esophageal reflux disease, at a savings of up to \$2400 a year. Check with your doctor to determine if the nonprescription Prilosec OTC is appropriate for you.

## What Are the Key Differences Among These Drugs?

- Some older people and some Asians break down PPIs more slowly. This does not change effectiveness of the drugs.
- Proton Pump Inhibitors may differ in the interactions they have with other drugs. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if a PPI may interact with other drugs you are taking.

These conclusions apply to most people taking one of these drugs, but they may not necessarily apply to you. There may be less expensive alternatives to the drug you are taking. We encourage you to talk with your physician about which, if any, drug is best for you. Keep in mind that it is always up to the physician to determine the appropriate drug,