

BurnoutThe Danger of Reflux Medications



A little-known limit of reflux medications

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GORD or GERD) medications were only ever designed to be used for a short period of time. Two weeks to two months maximum. Although we naturopaths have known that for a long time, many clients come to us having continued to take these medications for years at a time, often unnecessarily. Now it has been shown that these drugs can significantly increase your risk of death from various chronic health conditions.

Stomach acid is good

Called proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), medications such as Nexium and Pariet, work by reducing your level of stomach acid. This sounds great when you want to alleviate that feeling of acid rising into your throat, but bear the following in mind:

- You need good stomach acid to kill off bacteria and other infectious organisms that enter the body via the digestive system in the food we eat
- You need good stomach acid to begin the process of breaking down protein in food and to activate digestive enzymes



- When stomach acid is strong (and it should be around a PH of 1.7) it sends a strong stimulus to the sphincter muscle in the oesophagus to remain closed preventing stomach contents rising up
- Good stomach acid is necessary to absorb minerals and nutrients, such as vitamin B12, vitamin C, calcium, iron and magnesium

The Risks of PPIs

Recent studies have confirmed that long term use of PPI's put you at greater risk for:

- Stomach cancer
- Bone fracture and osteoporosis
- Clostridium difficile infection (a gut infection)
- Pneumonia
- Myocardial infarction
- Stroke
- Gastritis
- IBS
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Kidney disease
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Fibromyalgia
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Nutrient deficiencies
- Colds and flu

What's more, in 50% of people who are on PPIs for a year or more, SIBO (or small intestinal bacterial overgrowth) becomes a common issue, further worsening symptoms.

How to get off PPIs

If you have been on PPIs for a long time and want to stop, bear in mind that there is usually a rebound period of a couple of weeks. During this time, symptoms usually get temporarily worse. This is usually enough to drive people back onto the medication before they are over this rebound period.

The good news is that it is possible for most people to slowly wean off of these medications safely with the use of specific natural medicines and some of the following dietary and lifestyle measures.

- Don't overeat
- Reduce weight
- Don't eat within 3 hours of bed
- Get more exercise



- Reduce simple carbohydrates
- Limit alcohol
- Limit coffee
- Avoid raw onion
- Limit carbonated drinks
- Eat less chocolate
- Avoid spearmint
- Elevate the bed head
- Sleep on your left side
- Manage stress
- Eat half an apple before bed

How Naturopathy helps

Natural medicine aims to optimise digestive processes, heal, soothe and protect the lining of the oesophagus and right nutrient deficiencies. What's more, natural medicine can also help alleviate the other repercussions of long term PPI use such as SIBO, IBS, and impaired immunity. See your naturopath.