

Could you decrease the dose or frequency of your reflux medication?

Many Australians are currently being treated with medicines for reflux but no longer experience regular symptoms. The majority of these people are treated with a medicine that belongs to the 'proton-pump inhibitors (PPIs)' medicine group, which includes esomeprazole (Nexium[®]) and pantoprazole (Somac[®]).

Your pharmacist has identified that you are taking esomeprazole or pantoprazole and believes it may be suitable for you to decrease the dose or frequency of this medicine.

What is reflux?

Reflux symptoms occur when the valve between the stomach and the oesophagus does not close properly and the stomach contents leak back into the oesophagus. The acidic contents cause a burning sensation in the chest or throat.

What can I do to improve my symptoms?

Medicines can be used to treat reflux, however there are several changes to your lifestyle that will also help improve your symptoms. These include:

- ✓ Maintaining a weight within the recommended range for your height
- ✓ Quitting smoking
- ✓ Modifying your diet, such as eating smaller meals and decreasing your intake of caffeine, chocolate, fats, spices, acidic foods and alcohol.
- ✓ Avoiding medications that can trigger reflux symptoms (see your pharmacist or doctor to find out if any of your medications could be causing your symptoms)
- ✓ Remaining upright after meals
- ✓ Elevating the head of your bed to decrease night-time symptoms

Can I continue taking this medicine if it is working?

Although the proton-pump inhibitor medicine group has benefits to people with severe oesophageal or gastrointestinal problems, many people continue taking the medicine even when they no longer need it and there are some problems that long-term use of the medicine can cause. These problems include a very small increase in the risk of the person getting stomach or chest infections, fracturing their hip, decreasing their kidney function or decreasing their absorption of important nutrients.

Your pharmacist recommends you speak to your doctor about the possibility of decreasing the dose of your medicine or taking it only when you experience symptoms. This will most likely decrease the number of tablets you need to take and may even decrease the monthly cost of your prescriptions.

For more information about reflux, visit the Gastroenterological Society of Australia's website at:

<http://www.gesa.org.au/leaflets/heartburn.cfm>

Have you discussed your reflux symptoms with your doctor or pharmacist recently?

Your doctor may like to see more information on the NPS website:

http://www.nps.org.au/health_professionals/publications/nps_news/current/nps_news_46/proton_pump_inhibitors