

## Take the “Burn” out of Heartburn

Heartburn occurs when acid from your stomach backs up into your throat. You may feel pain or burning in the stomach, chest, or throat. Heartburn often happens at night or after a big meal.

### ***What can I do to Prevent Heartburn?***

Sometimes there are easy things you can do to decrease heartburn.

- If you are overweight, lose weight.
- Avoid tight fitting clothes.
- Avoid foods that give you heartburn.
- Eat small meals.
- Don't lie down for at least 30 minutes after eating.
- Raise the head of the bed (six inches).
- If you smoke, try to stop.

If lifestyle changes don't help, you may also need to take a medicine to prevent or treat your heartburn. Different kinds of heartburn medicines are available. The most common are **antacids**. They neutralize stomach acid (makes it less acidic). **H2-blockers** or **proton pump inhibitors** (PPIs) reduce the amount of acid your stomach makes.

### ***How fast do Heartburn Medicines Start Working?***

Antacids work fastest, within a few minutes. H2-blockers usually work within an hour. Proton pump inhibitors may take up to 24 hours to kick in.

### ***How do I know which Antacid is right for me?***

There are a lot of antacids, but they are not all the same. Depending on their ingredients they can have different side effects.

- Antacids with aluminum (e.g., *Gelusil*) or calcium (*Tums*, *Roloids*) might cause constipation.
- Antacids with magnesium (e.g., *Maalox*, *Mylanta* [U.S.]) might cause diarrhea.
  - Check with your prescriber before taking these if you have kidney problems.
- Effervescent antacids (e.g., *Alka-Seltzer*) may have salt in them and can raise blood pressure. They can also contain aspirin, which may cause bleeding in your stomach.

### ***Which Heartburn Medicine Should I Take?***

The choice of heartburn med is often based on how quickly you need relief and how often you have heartburn. Your pharmacist can help you pick the heartburn med that's best for you.

- For quick relief, try an antacid first. These don't cost a lot and work well if you only have heartburn once in a while. They're short acting, so not the best choice for frequent heartburn.
- For longer acting relief, try an H2-blocker (e.g., *Zantac*, *Pepcid AC*). These won't work as fast as an antacid, but may last up to 12 hours.
- Or for quick relief that lasts longer than an antacid alone, try a combo product (antacid + H2-blocker), like *Duo Fusion* [U.S.] or *Pepcid Complete*.
- Save PPIs (e.g., *Olex* [Canada], *Prevacid 24HR* [U.S.], *Prilosec OTC* [U.S.]) for severe or frequent heartburn. They are more expensive, don't work as fast, and last up to 24 hours.

### ***Call Your Prescriber if you:***

- Have trouble swallowing or pain when you swallow.
- See blood in your stool or vomit.
- Feel dizzy, light-headed, or short of breath.
- Have heartburn more than three times a week for more than two weeks.

[This handout may not cover all possible information. It does not replace the need for professional medical care. Always follow the instructions from your healthcare provider.] [July 2016]