

# Choosing a PPI To Treat Heartburn, Acid Reflux & GERD

## What is GERD?

You may know GERD as heartburn or acid reflux. GERD stands for gastroesophageal reflux disease. It occurs when the ring of muscles between your stomach and your esophagus—the tube that leads from your throat to your stomach—doesn't work right. The muscles either don't close all the way, or they open too often. Then acid from your stomach can back up, or reflux, into your esophagus. This causes that burning feeling that starts in your chest and moves up into your throat.

## Treatment

Treatment depends on how often you have heartburn symptoms.

- If you don't get heartburn often, try taking an over-the-counter antacid, like Maalox or Tums. If these do not work, you can try an H2 blocker, like Pepcid or Zantac. They work more slowly than antacids, but they provide relief for a longer time.
- If you have heartburn more than twice a week for more than 4 weeks and antacids don't help, you need to see a doctor. You probably need a medicine called a proton pump inhibitor (PPI).

## Taking a PPI for GERD

We compared 7 proton pump inhibitors (PPIs). This is what we found:

**All PPIs work well.** All the PPIs completely relieved symptoms for about 7 out of 10 people within 4 weeks. And they all healed damage to the esophagus in about 9 out of 10 people within 8 weeks.

**All PPIs are generally safe for short-term use.** PPIs can cause some minor side effects, such as headache and diarrhea. But most people can use PPIs without problems. And most need a PPI for only a few months. If PPIs are used for more than a few months, there is a higher risk of pneumonia, infection, and fractures.

### PPIs differ a lot in price.

Over-the-counter PPIs cost about \$19–\$24 per month. Prescription generic PPIs cost \$69–\$172 per month. Prescription brand-name PPIs cost \$170–\$375 per month.

## Our advice:

We chose the following as **Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs**. You can get them without a prescription:

- Prilosec OTC
- Generic Omeprazole OTC
- Prevacid 24HR

Many people take PPIs for too long. If you are taking a PPI, ask your doctor if you can stop taking it after a few months.



# Comparing the Cost of PPIs

**Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs are in blue.** We recommend these drugs because they work as well as the other PPIs but they cost much less. Each is taken once a day. For more information, visit our free website, [www.ConsumerReportsHealth.org/BestBuyDrugs](http://www.ConsumerReportsHealth.org/BestBuyDrugs).

Generic Name & Dose	Brand Name (or generic)	Cost Per Month <sup>1,2</sup>
Esomeprazole 20 mg capsules	Nexium	\$248
Esomeprazole 40 mg capsules	Nexium	\$239
Dexlansoprazole 30 mg sustained-release tablets	Kapidex	\$174
Dexlansoprazole 60 mg sustained-release tablets	Kapidex	\$170
<b>Lansoprazole 20 mg delayed-release tablets</b>	<b>Prevacid 24HR</b>	<b>\$23</b>
Lansoprazole 15 mg delayed-release capsules	Prevacid	\$267
Lansoprazole 15 mg delayed-release tablets	Prevacid	\$242
Lansoprazole 30 mg delayed-release capsules	Prevacid	\$253
Lansoprazole 30 mg delayed-release tablets	Prevacid	\$237
<b>Omeprazole 20 mg tablets</b>	<b>Prilosec OTC</b>	<b>\$24</b>
<b>Omeprazole 20 mg tablets</b>	<b>Generic OTC</b>	<b>\$19</b>
Omeprazole 10 mg delayed-release capsules	Prilosec	\$192
Omeprazole 10 mg sustained-release capsules	generic	\$110
Omeprazole 20 mg delayed-release capsules	Prilosec	\$220
Omeprazole 20 mg delayed-release capsules	generic	\$69
Omeprazole 40 mg sustained-release capsules	Prilosec	\$378
Omeprazole 40 mg sustained-release capsules	generic	\$172
Omeprazole/Sodium Bicarbonate 20 mg/1,100 mg capsules	Zegerid	\$245
Omeprazole/Sodium Bicarbonate 40 mg/1,100 mg capsules	Zegerid	\$249
Omeprazole/Sodium Bicarbonate 20 mg/1,100 mg capsules	Zegerid OTC	\$21
Pantoprazole 20 mg delayed-release tablets	Protonix	\$199
Pantoprazole 20 mg delayed-release tablets	generic	\$142
Pantoprazole 40 mg delayed-release tablets	Protonix	\$192
Pantoprazole 40 mg delayed-release tablets	generic	\$137
Rabaprazole 20 mg tablets	AcipHex	\$274

<sup>1</sup> Average monthly cost is based on recommended dosage of one pill daily.

<sup>2</sup> Monthly cost reflects nationwide retail average prices for June 2009, rounded to the nearest dollar. Information derived by *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* from data provided by Wolters Kluwer Health, Pharmaceutical Audit Suite.® Wolters Kluwer Health is not involved in our analysis or recommendations.