I take a proton pump inhibitor every day for acid reflux. Is long-term use safe?

November 20, 2018 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) are a class of medications that reduce stomach acid. PPIs are used to treat various acid-related disorders such as heartburn and stomach ulcers. PPIs are available over-the-counter and by prescription. Some common versions are esomeprazole (Nexium), lansoprazole (Prevacid) and omeprazole (Prilosec).

When taken as directed, PPIs are generally safe for most people. However, there are some risks associated with them, particularly when used long-term. Although these risks are uncommon, kidney disease, fractures, infections and vitamin deficiencies are associated with using PPIs for more than a year. A recent study found that long-term PPI use may raise risk of liver cancer.

When taking PPIs, your doctor can help you sort out whether the benefits outweigh the risks. If you have taken a PPI for more than a year, don't stop abruptly. Your doctor can suggest ways to take a PPI safely, as well as help you find ways to reduce acid reflux that don't involve taking medicine. Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease Awareness Week is November 20-26, and a great time to learn more about GERD.

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