

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 four weeks and antacids don't help, you need to see a doctor. You probably need a medicine called a proton pump inhibitor (PPI).
- Talk with your doctor about the role that dietary and lifestyle changes can play in alleviating heartburn, too, such as eating smaller meals and not lying down for at least three hours after eating, losing weight if you need to, and avoiding alcohol.

Taking a PPI for GERD

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

All PPIs work well. All the PPIs completely relieved symptoms for about seven out of 10 people within four weeks. And they all healed damage to the esophagus in about eight out of 10 people within eight 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 \$17–\$24 per month. Prescription generic PPIs cost \$58–\$163 per month. Prescription brand-name PPIs cost \$183–\$374 per month.

Our advice:

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

- **Generic omeprazole OTC**
- **Generic lansoprazole OTC**

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 typically prescribed once a day. Our analysis is based on a scientific review by the Oregon Health and Science University-based Drug Effectiveness Review Project. This is a summary of a longer, more detailed report you can find at www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org.

Generic Name & Dose	Brand Name (or generic) ¹	Cost Per Month ²
Dexlansoprazole 30 mg sustained-release tablets	Dexilant	\$188
Dexlansoprazole 60 mg sustained-release tablets	Dexilant	\$183
Esomeprazole 20 mg capsules	Nexium	\$240
Esomeprazole 40 mg capsules	Nexium	\$234
Lansoprazole 15 mg delayed-release capsules	Prevacid	\$265
Lansoprazole 15 mg delayed-release capsules	Generic	\$119
Lansoprazole 20 mg delayed-release tablets (nonprescription)	Prevacid 24HR	\$24 ³
Lansoprazole 20 mg delayed-release tablets (nonprescription)	Generic	\$17³
Lansoprazole 30 mg delayed-release capsules	Prevacid	\$275
Lansoprazole 30 mg delayed-release capsules	Generic	\$107
Omeprazole 10 mg delayed-release capsules	Prilosec	\$211
Omeprazole 10 mg delayed-release capsules	Generic	\$64
Omeprazole 20 mg tablets (nonprescription)	Prilosec OTC	\$22 ³
Omeprazole 20 mg tablets (nonprescription)	Generic	\$17³
Omeprazole 20 mg delayed-release capsules	Prilosec	\$236
Omeprazole 20 mg delayed-release capsules	Generic	\$58
Omeprazole 40 mg delayed-release capsules	Prilosec	\$374
Omeprazole 40 mg delayed-release capsules	Generic	\$134
Pantoprazole 20 mg delayed-release tablets	Protonix	\$254
Pantoprazole 20 mg delayed-release tablets	Generic	\$70
Pantoprazole 40 mg delayed-release tablets	Protonix	\$232
Pantoprazole 40 mg delayed-release tablets	Generic	\$66
Rabeprazole 20 mg tablets	AcipHex	\$355

1. "Generic" indicates drug sold by generic name. Among PPIs, omeprazole, omeprazole/sodium bicarbonate, lansoprazole, and pantoprazole are available as generic drugs.
2. Monthly cost reflects nationwide retail average prices for April 2013, rounded to the nearest dollar. Information was derived by *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* from data provided by Symphony Health Solutions, which is not involved in our analysis or recommendations. Average monthly cost is based on recommended dosage of one pill daily.
3. Prices for these medications were obtained by Consumer Reports secret shoppers at five major chain pharmacies (CVS, Rite Aid, Target, Walgreens, and Walmart) and local supermarkets across the U.S. in January 2013. The prices from the various stores were averaged to yield per-pill prices, which were then converted into a monthly price.

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