

Once your PPI course is complete it is likely that your doctor will prescribe an alginate to control your symptoms.

It is important that you do not take *antacids* at the same time as a PPI as the two will not work together. Both PPI and *antacid* treatments affect the pH level – how alkaline or acidic the content of your stomach is. The two therefore do not mix and can cause an adverse reaction in the stomach. This is why the best complementary treatment for breakthrough whilst being treated on a PPI is an *alginate*, such as Gaviscon Advance. An *alginate* does not affect pH balance and only acts as a barrier to stop the acid rising up the food pipe.

Heartburn is very common and although uncomfortable it is usually nothing to worry about. However, if you are concerned about your symptoms or why you have been prescribed medication speak to your GP, Practice Nurse or Pharmacist or call NHS Direct on:

0845 4647



INTRODUCTION

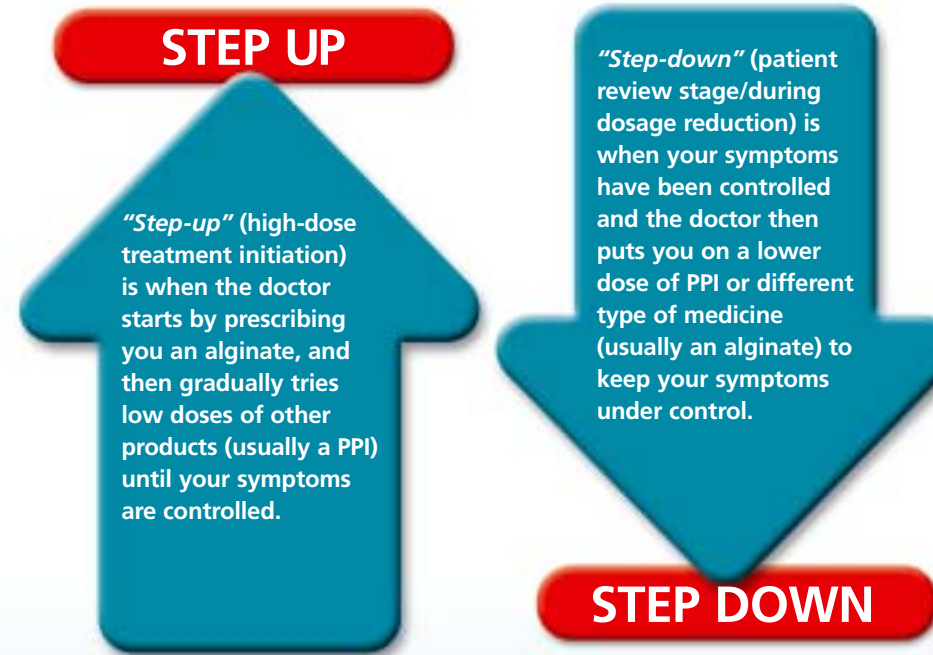
Hello,

I'm Dr. Chris Steele, the resident GP from ITV's popular show, *This Morning*. I qualified as a doctor 37 years ago and have been treating patients ever since. Over the years I have met many patients who have come to me feeling confused and in pain from heartburn. Heartburn is a very common condition, which can be treated quickly and easily, and of course your GP will always be available to provide advice and guidance in managing your symptoms.

Dr. Chris Steele

The type of treatment that you are on will depend on how severe your symptoms are.

For mild to moderate heartburn, you are likely to be treated on what GPs call a "step-up" or "step-down" basis:



For severe heartburn you are more than likely to be treated with a high dose of a Proton Pump Inhibitor (PPI) such as Omeprazole until your symptoms have been controlled. The dose is usually gradually decreased on a trial basis to see if a lower dose can control your symptoms.

Your GP, Practice Nurse or Pharmacist will recommend the best treatment option for your symptoms but you should always read the label and patient information leaflet that comes with any medication.

IS MY MEDICATION WORKING? I'M STILL GETTING HEARTBURN!

You could be having "breakthrough symptoms" of heartburn, a very common experience – up to 50% of patients, even those on a high dose PPI treatment report to have experienced symptoms of acid breakthrough.

Acid breakthrough can occur at the 3 stages of PPI treatment:

- **When your GP starts you on a high dose PPI treatment for the first time.** This is because it can take a PPI 3 to 4 days to work fully and stop the stomach producing acid
- **During ongoing treatment.** This is particularly common at night. In between doses, the effects of the PPI can taper off, resulting in the return of heartburn symptoms
- **During your GP review stage/when reducing your PPI dosage or stepping you off the PPI.** This is caused by your body adjusting to the reduction or stoppage of the PPI treatment, which can result in the production of stomach acid and the return of heartburn symptoms

Almost **2 out of 10** patients on a high dose PPI experience acid breakthrough at high dose PPI treatment initiation



5 out of 10 patients on a high dose PPI experience acid breakthrough symptoms during ongoing treatment



Almost **7 out of 10** patients on a PPI experience acid breakthrough symptoms when their PPI dosage is reduced or when taken off PPI treatment



If you do experience acid breakthrough symptoms, *talk to your doctor*, who may prescribe an *alginate* such as Gaviscon Advance at the same time as your PPI to help you cope with breakthrough symptoms of heartburn.

HOW DO I TREAT HEARTBURN?

You can choose from a number of different treatments but it really does depend on how bad your symptoms are. The main treatments prescribed by Healthcare Professionals like myself are:

ALGINATES

Alginates such as Gaviscon Advance form a protective layer which floats on top of the stomach contents, preventing acid escaping into the foodpipe.

ACID REDUCERS

Acid Reducers including H₂ Antagonists, such as Zantac and PepcidTwo, work by reducing acidity in the stomach.

PROTON PUMP INHIBITORS (PPIs)

Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) such as Omeprazole (Losec) and Lansoprazole (Zoton) stop the stomach producing too much acid. However they should NEVER be taken with antacids but they CAN be taken with alginates.

NB: Antacids such as Rennies, Setlers or Bisodol, neutralise stomach acid, and can provide symptomatic relief from heartburn.

WHAT IS HEARTBURN?

Heartburn, also known as dyspepsia, is a burning pain that we feel in the chest area usually after we have eaten a meal, but it can also occur during the night. This burning sensation

When we eat, our stomach produces acid to break down and digest our food.

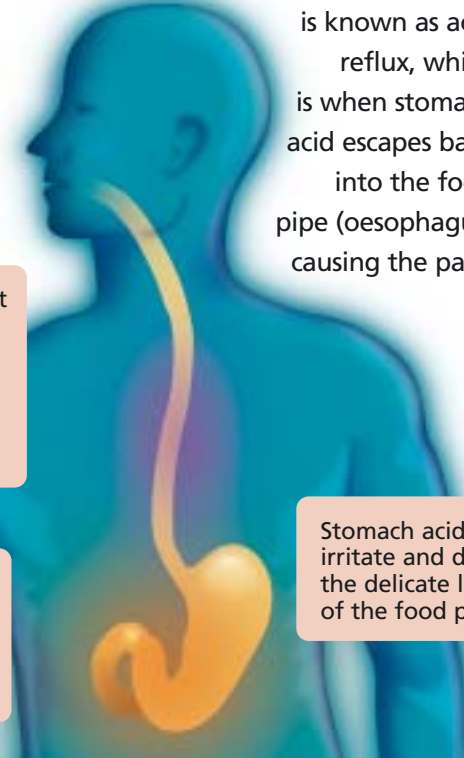
This acid is usually kept inside the stomach by a muscle, which acts like a valve at the end of the food pipe that connects your mouth to your stomach.

This valve opens when we eat food and closes when food is passed down into the stomach.

Occasionally, the valve opens at the wrong time, allowing stomach acid to be squeezed up the food pipe. This is known as acid reflux. In fact, your stomach acid is as strong as car battery acid – so it is no surprise that you experience pain.

If you think that you could be suffering from heartburn don't worry because you are not alone. Heartburn is a very common condition, which is easily treated with medicines. However changes to your diet and lifestyle should also be considered, to make sure that your medication helps you as much as possible.

is known as acid reflux, which is when stomach acid escapes back into the food pipe (oesophagus) causing the pain.



Stomach acids can irritate and damage the delicate lining of the food pipe.

HAVE I GOT HEARTBURN?

If you experience a painful burning at the centre of your chest, have difficulty swallowing or feel like your food is coming back up your food pipe into your mouth, then you are probably experiencing a form of heartburn. Lying down or bending over can also make the symptoms worse. The intensity of heartburn varies from person to person; some people even experience pains so intense that they think they are suffering from a heart attack.

Why Do I Get Heartburn?

Some of the foods you eat can aggravate your stomach making the valve at the bottom of the food pipe open, triggering heartburn symptoms.

Foods which can trigger heartburn include:

- Coffee
- Acidic or fizzy drinks
- Alcohol
- Spices/spicy food
- Fatty foods
- Chocolate
- Cucumber
- Onion
- Tomatoes
- Citrus fruits



It is not only food that aggravates the condition; some medicines can worsen the symptoms of heartburn.

Medicines which worsen heartburn symptoms include:

- Nitrates used for heart conditions
- Calcium channel blockers used for angina such as Verapamil and Nifedipine
- Doxycycline (an antibiotic)
- Bisphosphonates (taken for osteoporosis)

Your lifestyle could be the cause of your heartburn symptoms and by changing some habits you can help to reduce pain and discomfort. For example, raising the level of the head of your bed can help to alleviate night time heartburn symptoms. You should also try to avoid the following:

- Foods which can trigger heartburn (see: [Why Do I Get Heartburn?](#))
- Being overweight
- Smoking
- Over indulgence in food or alcohol
- Eating or drinking late at night
- Poor posture
- Bending over with a full stomach



In addition, some women can experience **heartburn during pregnancy**. This is quite common, particularly with twins and can be easily treated with an alginate such as Gaviscon Advance or medications available from the pharmacy (always check with GP or pharmacist before taking any medication during pregnancy).