



# Torrance Hospital IPA

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**Your doctor has just prescribed a proton pump inhibitor (PPI) to help you manage your gastrointestinal symptoms: *What should you know?***

**Important note: Be sure to discuss *all* your options and questions with your doctor.**

**Q: How does my doctor determine whether I need a PPI?**

**A:** Your doctor may have just told you that you exhibit the symptoms of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) or a related gastrointestinal (GI) disorder, which can cause painful ulcers on the esophageal lining. PPIs are recommended for treatment of GERD by the American College of Gastroenterology because they have been shown to be the most effective available treatment for reducing the symptoms and healing the esophagus. They work by reducing acid production in the stomach.

**Q: How do brand-name and generic PPIs compare?**

**A:** Generic and brand PPIs have been shown in repeated clinical studies to be *equally effective* in treating acid-related GI disorders. Brand-name drugs cost significantly more.

**Q: What are the names of these drugs and in what form(s) are they available?**

**A:** Brand (generic) – form(s):

- Nexium (esomeprazole) – capsule (may be opened and mixed with certain foods) and injection.
- Aciphex (rabeprazole) – tablet.
- Prevacid (lansoprazole) – capsule (may be opened and mixed with certain foods) or liquid. Also available as an orally disintegrating tablet (place under the tongue).
- Prilosec (omeprazole) – capsule and tablet. Capsule may be opened and the contents mixed with certain foods.
- Protonix (pantoprazole) – tablet.

**Q: When and how often do I need to take it?**

**A:** Most patients take this medication once a day in the morning before breakfast; however, if your symptoms worsen at night, it may be better for you to take it before dinner. If you are a patient with mild-to-moderate symptoms, it may be safe and effective, as well as economical, to take it on an as-needed basis.

**Q: Will my health plan cover this prescription?**

**A:** Your doctor may be able to answer this question, or you can check your health plan's formulary or call the customer service department. When covered, generic co-pays are lower than brand. When making cost comparisons, you may also want to evaluate the utility/cost to you of Prilosec OTC and ask if your health plan will fully or partially cover its cost.

**Q: How can I find out more?**

**A:** Check the websites for the

- American College of Gastroenterology: [www.gi.org](http://www.gi.org)
- Consumer Reports:  
[www.consumerreports.org/health/treatment-centers/digestive-system/heartburn.htm](http://www.consumerreports.org/health/treatment-centers/digestive-system/heartburn.htm)
- WebMD: [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)
- Drug Digest: [www.drugdigest.org](http://www.drugdigest.org)

**Q: I can afford to pay for the brand name. Why should I be concerned about the cost?**

**A:** While the price you pay for your drugs may not be an issue for you, the escalating cost of health care in this country is a concern to all of us. Choosing generic over brand name prescriptions involves no sacrifice of good health and is a way that patients and doctors can make a responsible contribution to decreasing our national health care costs.



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## **Your doctor has just prescribed a proton pump inhibitor (PPI) to help you manage your gastrointestinal symptoms: What should you know?**

### **Q: How does my doctor determine whether I need a PPI?**

**A:** Your doctor may have just told you that you exhibit the symptoms of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) or a related gastrointestinal (GI) disorder. Those symptoms are chronic heartburn, sour taste in the mouth and/or the feeling that stomach contents are backing up into your esophagus. This can cause painful erosions or ulcers on the esophageal lining. PPIs are recommended for treatment of GERD by the American College of Gastroenterology because they have been shown to be the most effective treatment currently on the market for reducing the symptoms and healing the esophagus. They work by binding to the gastric acid pump in the stomach and reducing production of acid.

### **Q: How do brand-name and generic PPIs compare?**

**A:** All PPIs have been shown in repeated clinical studies to be effective in treating acid-related GI disorders. Generic PPIs are equally as effective as brand-name PPIs. Brand-name drugs cost significantly more than do the generic equivalents.

### **Q: What are the names of these drugs and in what form(s) are they available?**

**A:** Brand (generic) – form(s):

- Nexium (esomeprazole) – capsule and injection. Capsule may be opened and the contents mixed with certain foods.
- Aciphex (rabeprazole) – tablet.
- Prevacid (lansoprazole) – capsule or liquid. Capsule may be opened and the contents mixed with certain foods. Also available as an orally disintegrating tablet (place under the tongue).
- Prilosec (omeprazole) – capsule and tablet. Capsule may be opened and the contents mixed with certain foods.
- Protonix (pantoprazole) – tablet.

### **Q: What makes the generic equivalent a good choice?**

**A:** The generic PPI may be a good choice for you if:

- Your doctor does not feel there would be an adverse reaction with other drugs you may be taking.
- You want to reduce your co-pay and the generic is included in your health plan's formulary.
- You and your doctor are not satisfied with your current medication and want to try an alternate treatment.

### **Q: Can I use an over-the-counter PPI?**

**A:** One of the PPIs, Prilosec OTC, is available in an over-the-counter dosage. The package warns that it should not be taken for more than 14 days unless ordered by a physician, so be sure to discuss the safety and efficacy of this option with your doctor.

**Q: When and how often do I need to take it?**

**A:** Most patients take this medication once a day in the morning before breakfast; however, if your symptoms worsen at night, it may be better for you to take it before dinner. Discuss this option with your doctor.

**Q: What if I don't need to take it all the time?**

**A:** If you are a patient with mild-to-moderate symptoms, it may be safe and effective, as well as economical, to take it on an as-needed basis. Discuss this option with your doctor.

**Q: Is there a difference in the co-pay for generic and brand PPI?**

**A:** Health plans differ in their formularies and co-pay programs, so you need to research your own plan or contact the customer service department. However, most health plans offer their members lower co-pays when the member selects a generic vs. a brand-name drug. When making cost comparisons, you may also want to evaluate the utility/cost to you of Prilosec OTC and ask if your health plan will fully or partially cover its cost.

**Q: Will my health plan cover this prescription?**

**A:** Your doctor may be able to answer this question, or you can check your health plan's formulary or call the customer service department.

**Q: How can I find out more?**

**A:** Check the websites for the

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- WebMD: [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)
- Drug Digest: [www.drugdigest.org](http://www.drugdigest.org)

to mention a few, or search on "proton pump inhibitors, generic."

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