



STOMACH FIRE AND ANTACIDS

In the last 12 months there have been some disturbing results coming out of a number of long range studies done on the long term use of the Protein Pump Inhibitors (PPI) omeprazole or esomeprazole, commonly known as Nexium, Somac and Zoton. These issues are quite serious. One study in Germany of 74,000 patients older than 74 years regularly taking PPI's were 44% more like to have Dementia/Alzheimer's. In 2016 a study following 10,482 people showed that those on PPI had a 20 to 50% incidence of Kidney disease and also showed that the higher the dose the higher the risk. Other issues include increased fractures, low Vitamin B12 levels, and 25% increase in premature death.

These drugs work by shutting down the cells that produce stomach acid permanently. The body then needs to make more of these cells to compensate (which is why you cannot go off these drugs suddenly as the rebound effect can be severe) as you need the acid to digest foods, particularly proteins. Inability to digest can result in bloating, low mineral and B12 absorption, and fatigue.

Short term use of such medications are not an issue, problems are more likely in use over many years. So it's a serious issue for millions of people. The use of such drugs as a prophylactic when taking pain killers could be reduced by taking slippery elm powder and taking them on a full stomach. Other chronic issues need to be addressed by a health professional and can include dietary changes. Wheat, yeast and sugar (especially together) are big triggers of heart burn and many will respond by cutting these things from the diet, or for some it's onions and tomatoes. You will not miss them when you feel so much better I assure you! A naturopath or Chinese Medicine doctor can help pinpoint your triggers and give good advice on herbs and dietary advice.

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Practical Preventable Medicine

GERD, or gastritis, can also be managed well with herbs. This will involve soothing the digestive system with herbs such as slippery elm, pro and pre-biotics to rebuild the micro flora of your stomach and digestive system. Dandelion tops (pu gong Yin) in TCM kills helicobacter pylori, which is responsible for stomach ulcers, and also reduces stomach acid. This is also often used in formula to treat gastritis and reflux. These treatments do need to be professionally prescribed. A recent study showed that acupuncture was as effective as PPI's for both short and long term relief of heart burn. It is very important to not come off these drugs (PPIs such as Nexium) suddenly, the patient should wean off gently with the assistance of their health professional.

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