

Heartburn medicines associated with chronic kidney disease risk

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A type of heartburn medication called proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) may be linked to long-term kidney damage, according to a new study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

"This is an important study because millions of Americans are on [proton pump inhibitors](#) and have been for many years," says Dr. Kenneth DeVault, a Mayo Clinic gastroenterologist who was not involved in the research.

Medications like Prilosec, Nexium and Prevacid belong to this class of drugs, which treat heartburn and [acid reflux](#) by lowering the amount of acid produced by the stomach. People who use PPIs have a 20 to 50 percent higher risk of [chronic kidney disease](#) compared with nonusers, according to the Johns Hopkins study. However, a direct cause-and-effect relationship between the drug and the disease was not established.

"I think more research on this subject will be important," says DeVault. "When you have that many people taking a drug, and there's a small potential risk, it certainly gets both physicians' and [patients'](#) attention."

DeVault cautions patients not to panic over news of the study. "The most important thing is to discuss it with a treating physician and make sure everyone is on the same page and understands the benefits and weighs those against this fairly small, but perhaps real, risk."

DeVault says, for some patients, a less powerful acid blocker and lifestyle changes could eliminate the need for PPI medication.

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