



Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs)

Using a research-based approach, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield chooses safe, effective PPI medications used to treat heartburn and other acid-related conditions for the drug list/formulary.

What are proton pump inhibitors (PPIs)?

PPI medications are used to treat heartburn, ulcers, acid reflux and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). These drugs block the release of acid into the stomach. This helps avoid burning and other symptoms caused by these conditions.

People with occasional heartburn may find relief with antacids like Maalox, Mylanta, Roloids and Tums. H2 blockers like cimetidine, ranitidine, famotidine or nizatidine may also help. If these drugs are not working well enough, PPIs may be an option. Here's a list of PPI medications:

- Aciphex (rabeprazole)
- Dexilant* (dexlansoprazole)
- Nexium (esomeprazole)
- Prevacid (lansoprazole)
- Prilosec and Prilosec OTC (omeprazole)
- Protonix (pantoprazole)
- Zegerid (omeprazole/sodium bicarbonate)

All PPIs work and have few side effects.
But doses and costs vary.

What does research say about PPI drugs?

All PPI medications work well for heartburn, acid reflux and GERD. And there aren't proven differences in how fast or long they work. PPIs have few side effects. The most common are diarrhea, dizziness, headache and upset stomach.

Who decides which PPI drugs are covered?

Our Pharmacy & Therapeutics (P&T) Committee includes a large group of doctors and pharmacists who are not employees of Anthem. This group and other professionals are responsible for the decisions surrounding our drug list/formulary — or list of covered medications. The P&T Committee reviews drugs for their safety, effectiveness and value. PPI medications on the drug list/formulary are selected as a result of these findings.



Where can I get more information?

The following websites offer valuable information about heartburn, acid reflux and GERD.

Effective Health Care Program effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov

This website is from the United States Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, a government research agency. It compares drugs and treatments.

National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse digestive.niddk.nih.gov

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases manages this website. It offers additional detail on heartburn, acid reflux and GERD.



Choosing PPI medications

Here's a step-by-step look at how the P&T Committee agreed on PPI medications for the drug list/formulary. Our approach is unique because we put clinical review first. This means drug list/formulary decisions are based first on quality data, instead of cost.

Step 1: Clinical review and rating

First, the P&T Committee compared all PPI medications by studying information from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and medical research. They also used a detailed report prepared by pharmacists about the medical research studies and how well each study was done. Then, based on the research, the committee rated how well each drug works and found that PPIs were similar in effectiveness and safety.

Step 2: Use and cost review

Next, the P&T Committee looked at the ratings from Step 1 and considered which drugs are prescribed most often. After that, cost was considered. They found:

- Nexium is one of the most popular PPIs. It comes in liquid, tablet and capsule forms.
- Nexium, Prevacid and Prilosec are FDA-approved for use in children and adults.
- Omeprazole (generic Prilosec), lansoprazole (generic Prevacid), pantoprazole (generic Protonix) and Nexium cost less for Anthem. This means they're also more affordable for you.

Step 3: Set coverage level

Finally, the P&T Committee discussed this information, decided which medications should be included on the drug list/formulary and set coverage levels.

Lower Cost (generics)	Moderate Cost	Higher Cost
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lansoprazole • omeprazole • pantoprazole 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nexium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aciphex • Dexilant* • Prevacid • Prilosec • Protonix

* Formerly known as Kapidex

Covered PPI medications

Omeprazole (generic Prilosec), lansoprazole (generic Prevacid) and pantoprazole (generic Protonix) have the most affordable copays. Nexium costs slightly more. The remaining PPIs have the highest copays or may not be covered, depending on your plan. To check coverage for a PPI medication, you can call Customer Care at the phone number found on your member ID card. Never stop or start any medication until your doctor has approved the change.



