

Self Care Briefing for Clinicians: Heartburn and Indigestion

Summary

Heartburn and indigestion are minor conditions that can be treated without the need for a GP consultation or prescription in the first instance. They can easily be treated with simple over-the-counter medication like antacids.

Recommendations for clinicians

- Provide the patient with a 'non-prescription' sheet or a patient information leaflet to promote education about self-limiting conditions suitable for self care when appropriate.
- Advise patients of safe and effective self care measures:
 - Reduce or stop smoking and reduce alcohol consumption.
 - Avoid non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) e.g., aspirin, ibuprofen and food that triggers symptoms.
 - Try and lose weight if you're overweight.
 - Eat smaller, more frequent meals and avoid eating within 3 to 4 hours before bed.
- Rarely, more serious medical problems may cause indigestion – particularly aged 55 or over. Advise patients to seek medical advice if symptoms last for most days for 3 weeks or they do not respond to treatment or you notice the following circumstances:
 - Pain and other chest/stomach symptoms.
 - Vomiting blood.
 - Swallowing problems.
 - Dark stools.
 - Unexplained weight loss.
 - Feeling faint.
 - Symptoms persist after recommended duration of over-the-counter treatment.
 - Feeling like there's a mass in the abdomen.

Examples of over-the-counter products available to buy

Please advise patients that suggested prices are, a guide, correct at the time of writing and are subject to change.

- Antacids: Not licensed for children under 12 years old (£2.50-£4.00 for up to 48 tablets).

- Bismuth subsalicylate e.g. Pepto-bismol® oral suspension: Not licensed for children under 16 years old (£3.00 for 120ml).
- Alginates (Gaviscon® Infant): Not licensed for children under 1 years old or children over 2 years old (£10.00 for 30 x 2g).
- Omeprazole (Pyrocalm Control® 20mg tablets): Not licensed for children under 18 years old (£10.00 for 14 tablets).
- Pantoprazole (Pantoloc Control® 20mg tablets): Not licensed for children under 18 years old (£13.00 for 14 tablets).

Further information

- [Selfcare forum](#)
- [NHS.uk](#)
- [Patient UK](#)

Document History

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