

The Healthy Living Report

Warning: These antacids can increase your risk of dementia by 44%

After a nice meal, some people sense it sneaking gradually upon them. Others are aware that it will occur after consuming particular meals. According to the American College of Gastroenterology, heartburn is an unwelcome ailment that impacts more than 60 million Americans every month and 15 million every day. For anybody seeking pain treatment, over-the-counter medications have become a popular option. However, recent research found that one common form of heartburn medicine might significantly increase your risk of developing dementia.

In February 2016, research findings published in the JAMA Neurology journal assessed potential links between over-the-counter proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), which are routinely prescribed to treat heartburn, peptic

ulcers, and GERD, **and the emergence of dementia.** A team of researchers looked at data from 73,679 dementia-free patients aged 75 and up. They next looked at chronic



consumption of PPIs like pantoprazole, esomeprazole, and omeprazole (marketed as Protonix, Prilosec, and Nexium, respectively) over the duration of 18 months. PPI used was defined as taking a minimum of one prescription for PPIs every quarter.

After eight years, the researchers checked back with the individuals to assess how

many had been medically classified as exhibiting cognitive deterioration. **The people who took the heartburn medication regularly had a 44 percent increased risk of dementia than those who did not take it.** The findings also disclosed that males who took PPIs had a somewhat greater risk of developing dementia than females and that those who only took them infrequently had a substantially overall lower risk. Despite the findings, the researchers stressed that further studies are required to show a correlation that goes beyond a statistical link between dementia and heartburn medication.

Britta Haenisch, MD, PhD, from the German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases in Bonn, and one of the scholars involved in the research disclosed, "Randomized, prospective clinical trials are needed to evaluate cause-and-



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effect relationships between long-term PPI use and possible effects on cognition in the elderly," She added that clinicians should continue to prescribe PPIs in line with medical guidelines **and should ensure they are not used inappropriately.**

While there is, indeed, a requirement for additional studies, the research's findings on the link between dementia and heartburn medication has been investigated. Scientists hypothesize that PPIs can penetrate the blood-brain barrier more readily in older persons as it gets more porous, allowing the drugs to interact with certain enzymes and eventually contribute to a rise in levels of the amyloid-beta and tau proteins that have been scientifically linked to Alzheimer's disease. According to WebMD, several research studies have revealed that PPI

usage can cause vitamin B12 deficiency, which is also linked to dementia.

Houman Javedan, MD, from the inpatient geriatrics at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, did not participate in the study. However, he confirmed that further studies were needed to confirm the mechanisms that are at work and clarify the impacts that PPI medication have on elderly populations. According to experts, the study's findings also reveal how many people continue to follow treatment protocols that they may no longer require. This can be due to several reasons, including routine, fear of questioning their doctor, or fear of what may happen if they stop taking the drugs.

Some practitioners intend to share the study's findings with patients to enable them to

make informed decisions about what drugs they take. ***"I'm going to disclose the finding to my patients and then let them decide whether they will take the risk or not,"*** Malaz Boustani, MD, from the Indiana University Center for Aging Research. According to Boustani, taking precautionary steps to minimize excess acid and avoid acid reflux can frequently help people wean themselves off heartburn drugs. **He recommends eating smaller meals, staying awake for a few hours after eating, and avoiding known triggers such as chocolate and coffee.**

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