

Heartburn Pills May Harm Your Bones



The “purple pill” and its brethren are no strangers to our television screens—or our medicine cabinets. These heartburn drugs, called proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), are the most popular heartburn medicines worldwide.

For this reason, recent research linking PPIs to a higher risk for hip, wrist, and spine fractures has doctors alarmed. The latest findings, from the *American Journal of Medicine*, suggest nearly 5 percent of all hip fractures could be blamed on PPI use. In another report, published in the *Annals of Family Medicine*, scientists combined the results of 11 previous studies. They found that people who took PPIs were significantly more likely to break their hip bone or any other bone.

Be sure to talk with your doctor about taking over-the-counter PPIs. Your doctor can assess your fracture risk. If it’s high, lower doses or different treatments may relieve your heartburn. Another form of heartburn medication, called histamine-2 receptor antagonists, blocks about 70 percent of stomach acid. They haven’t shown the same link to fractures.

Lifestyle changes can also help put out the fire of heartburn. Try these drug-free solutions:

- Avoid foods and drinks that make your heartburn worse. Common culprits include coffee, citrus fruits, tomato-based dishes, full-fat dairy, and alcohol.
- To relieve pain, take acetaminophen. Aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen can irritate your stomach.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing that won’t constrict your stomach.
- Eat small meals throughout the day, and stop eating at least two hours before going to sleep.
- When in bed, raise your head 6 inches above your stomach with a wedge support. ■

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Coping with Grief That Won't Fade

When someone you love passes away, it's normal to experience pain, shock, anger, or guilt.

It may seem these feelings will never go away, but for most people, the grief eventually subsides and becomes manageable. Some people, however, suffer from what's called complicated grief. They find themselves unable to move on.

Complicated grief is more likely after a death that was sudden, violent, or premature. It's also more likely in people with a history of depression or another mental health disorder.

Symptoms of complicated grief last more than six months after the death and include:

- Feeling intensely lonely even with other people
- Strong anger related to the death
- Feeling life is meaningless without the person
- Finding it hard to accept the death
- Feeling shocked, stunned, or emotionally numb
- Having strong physical or emotional reactions to reminders of the loss

If you or someone you know could be dealing with complicated grief, seek help from a professional.

Winterize Your Exercise!

Don't use cold weather as an excuse to stay on the couch until spring. Work with the cold—not against it—to winter-proof your exercise routine.

SNOW DAY SAFETY TIPS

When the temperature drops, a few extra steps can help keep your outdoor workout safe:

- **Do a warm-up first.** Your muscles, ligaments, and tendons are more likely to get injured when cold.
- **Dress in light layers.** That way, you can remove or replace clothing as needed. The innermost layer should be a breathable fabric that lets sweat pass through. The outer layer should protect you from the wind.
- **Don a hat.** Up to 50 percent of the heat lost from your body while outside comes

from a bare head and neck.

- **Drink plenty of fluids.** It's easy to get dehydrated without realizing it in cold weather, so be sure to bring your water bottle.

HOW TO MOVE IT INSIDE

When the weather outside is just too frightful, another option is to move your favorite summer activity inside. Jog or bike at the gym, swim in an indoor pool, or shoot hoops on an indoor court.

Some activities, such as tennis and softball, don't have exact equivalents. But you can still stay in shape for summer. Now is the perfect time for that yoga or dance class you've always wanted to take.

At home, a new fitness toy—such as hand weights or an exercise DVD—can boost your motivation. So keep moving, Nebraska! ■



Walk the Mall This Winter! Mall walking can be fun exercise in foul weather—and you may meet other like-minded adults while you're doing it. For tips on starting a walking program or to download a log to track your progress, visit www.bluehealthadvantage.com. Choose "WalkingWorks" from under "Tools and Programs" to find these free resources.

How to Reach Us

From a simple phone call to following our tweets, there are more ways than ever to connect with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska:

- Call Member Services at **888-592-8960**, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

- Write to us at:
P.O. Box 3248, Omaha, NE 68180-0001.
- Visit us online at www.nebraskablue.com.
- Follow us on Twitter [@BCBSNebraska](https://twitter.com/BCBSNebraska).
- Watch our videos at:
www.youtube.com/nebraskabluecross.



STEAMED ASPARAGUS *with lemon*

This simple side dish is ready to eat in just 15 minutes, and it has no saturated or trans fats.

- 2 lb. asparagus, tough ends trimmed
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- 2 tbsp. lemon juice

Place asparagus in a steamer basket over boiling water. Cover saucepan and steam five minutes or until bright green and tender. Rinse asparagus under cold water; drain thoroughly. Combine oil and lemon juice in a bowl, and pour over asparagus. Season with pepper to taste. Serve at room temperature, if desired.

Serves four; serving size is 1/4 of recipe. Each serving provides: Calories 70, Total fat 3 g (Saturated fat 0 g), Cholesterol 0 mg, Sodium 0 mg, Total carbohydrate 9 g, Fiber 5 g, Protein 5 g.



Why Is Baked Better Than Fried?

You probably know it's wise to avoid fried foods. But why, exactly, is that?

FRYING ADDS FAT AND MORE
Several factors may affect the health of fried-food lovers. Frying adds fat to foods. That means additional calories, which can lead to weight gain.

Some of the fat used for frying, especially in processed foods and restaurant items, is saturated or trans fat. Both these types of fat can raise cholesterol levels. And that, in turn, increases the risk for heart disease and stroke.

Pan-frying also creates certain chemicals—called heterocyclic amines (HCAs) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs)—in beef, pork, fish, and poultry. According to the National Cancer Institute, some studies suggest there may be a link between eating foods containing HCAs and PAHs and an increased risk for cancer of the colon, pancreas, or prostate. However, more

research is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn.

MAKING SMARTER CHOICES
To say good-bye to fried foods at home, opt for lower-fat cooking methods such as:

- Baking
- Roasting
- Stir-frying
- Steaming *try this*

In restaurants, look for tasty alternatives to fried favorites. Instead of fried chicken or fish, order grilled. Instead of french fries, choose a baked potato, brown rice, or steamed veggies. ■

Track Your Weight-Loss Efforts Online! Anyone can use the free Diet and Fitness Tracker online at www.livewellnebraska.com to help them reach their healthy goals. The tracker can help you keep tabs on your daily fat intake, for example, to see if your new low-fat diet is helping you shed pounds.

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OUR COMMUNITY

Emotional Support Matters in Cancer Care

People with cancer who are able to manage their stress through social support live longer than those who don't, according to a commentary published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

The commentary cites research showing people with cancer who receive emotional support live longer than those who only receive standard medical cancer care. Such support included discussions about resuscitation preferences, pain control, and quality of life. Emotional support appears to be both psychologically and medically beneficial.

If you have cancer, ask your care team to put you in touch with resources that offer support.

Stay Safe on Your Cellphone

Older adults are at risk when they talk on a cellphone while crossing the street, according to a study published in *Psychology and Aging*. Researchers looked at the differences between a group of people ages 18 to 26 and a group ages 59 to 81. Both groups crossed a virtual street while undistracted, while listening to music through headphones, or while talking on a hands-free cellphone.

Researchers found the older adults were much more likely to fail at crossing the road—

defined as either being hit by a virtual car or not making it across in 30 seconds—than the younger group.

Protect Grandkids from Choking

Emergency rooms treat more than 10,000 children a year who have choked on foods, says the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The AAP also notes that, among kids younger than 10, nearly 70 of those cases prove fatal.

To keep your grandchildren safe, avoid feeding them these high-risk foods:

- Hot dogs, sausages, and meat sticks
- Chunks of peanut butter
- Hard candy
- Whole grapes
- Marshmallows
- Popcorn
- Nuts and seeds
- Chewing gum

Always watch children closely while they're eating, and maintain calm, unhurried meal and snack times.

