

Heartburn: treatment options

Use this decision aid to help you and your healthcare professional talk about how to treat heartburn that lasts longer than 4 weeks.

Frequently Asked Questions ↓	Proton pump inhibitor medication (PPI)	Laparoscopic surgery (also known as keyhole surgery)
Why would I be offered this treatment?	If you have long-term heartburn lasting longer than 4 weeks, one possible treatment is to use medication called proton pump inhibitors (PPI).	If treatment with PPI medication is not working or giving you problems, another possible treatment is laparoscopic surgery.
What does the treatment involve?	You take one or more tablets that reduce the amount of stomach acid every day for 4 or 8 weeks, and possibly longer.	The operation makes it more difficult for acidic food to come up into the gullet (oesophagus) from the stomach, and it is done under general anaesthetic. It takes a week or so to recover. Medication is not usually needed after surgery.
How long will it take for the treatment to work?	Most people's symptoms improve after a few days of starting this medication.	Most people's symptoms improve soon after surgery. Swallowing might be uncomfortable for a few weeks, but this goes away.
Will my symptoms get better?	Heartburn symptoms get better in 60 to 90 in every 100 people (60–90%), but symptoms continue or come back in roughly 40 in every 100 people (40%).	Symptoms get better in 90 to 95 in every 100 people (90–95%). A small number of patients have no improvement.
What are the risks of this treatment?	Risks of serious harm are rare.	As with any surgery, there is a risk of bleeding and infection. General anaesthetic can also be risky for some people. Surgery needs to be repeated in 4 to 6 in every 100 people (4–6%).
What are the side effects of this treatment?	Roughly 7 in every 100 people (7%) have side effects from the medicine. The most common mild side effects are headache, abdominal pain, nausea, diarrhoea, vomiting, and increased gas.	Problems after the surgery are common, but resolve after a few days. These can include temporary difficulty in swallowing in up to 50 in every 100 people (50%), shoulder pain in roughly 60 in every 100 people (60%), and problems with belching in up to 85 in every 100 people (85%).
How long will it take me to recover from surgery?	Does not apply	Recovery takes a week or two. Most people are able to go home on the day of the operation.

This decision aid is to help you make a decision about treatments recommended in NICE's guideline on [gastro-oesophageal reflux disease and dyspepsia in adults: investigation and management](#).