

[IMAGE]

Acid Suppressants Linked to Fracture Risk

By Editorial Staff

Proton-pump inhibitors sound like something right out of Star Wars, but they're actually common - far too common, considering their potential risks - here in the real world. This class of drugs, which includes Nexium, Prilosec and Prevacid, among others, is prescribed to treat digestive tract issues such as gastroesophageal reflux, chronic dyspepsia (indigestion) and peptic ulcer disease. These conditions are all characterized by excessive production of stomach acid. The intended mechanism of action of proton-pump inhibitors, as you might expect, is to reduce acid by blocking the gastric proton pump; a decidedly unintended mechanism of action is increased fracture risk.

Following a recent Food and Drug Administration (FDA) review of studies, the administration posted a "class labeling change" notice on its Web site alerting health care professionals and consumers that proton-pump inhibitors will now feature a label warning regarding "a possible increased risk of fractures at the hip, wrist and spine" attributable to their use. According to the FDA, people ages 50 or older who had been taking the medication for one year or more, often in high doses, were at the greatest risk.

If your doctor tells you proton-pump inhibitors are in your immediate future, ask about the potential side effects and if you can avoid taking medication altogether.

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