

Symptoms may hide other problems Is that heartburn really heartburn?

If your medicine cabinet or office desk is full of remedies that you regularly rely on for relief of persistent heartburn, acid regurgitation, excessive burping or belching, increased abdominal bloating, nausea, feeling of abnormal or slow digestion or feeling full early on during a meal, you might be one of eight million Canadians who suffer from upper gastrointestinal symptoms and underlying disease.

"Many Canadians suffer the effects of acid-related disease (ARD) but few are familiar with the condition, including the proper name, cause or treatment," says Dr. Gary Levy, President of the Canadian Digestive Health Foundation (CDHF), a national registered charity dedicated to supporting public awareness and education and research on digestive health and disease.

"As a result of this lack of information and misconceptions, many Canadians often wait to seek medical attention and are not taking advantage of the most effective treatments. The majority of patients with symptoms have underlying disease and most often it is in the esophagus," adds Dr. Levy.

A class of medication called proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) has been found to be the most effective in providing sustained resolution of symptoms and promoting healing of dam-

age that is caused by long-term exposure to acid.

Despite the clinical evidence supporting their effectiveness, PPIs are not always used or are taken incorrectly. In some cases the most effective PPI may not be prescribed, sometimes resulting in break-through symptoms.

International and Canadian studies confirm that many patients continue to use over-the-counter remedies in addition to their prescribed PPI. These same studies also highlight that patients still experience symptoms despite these remedies and changes to diet and lifestyle.

"We need to improve how we view and treat ARD. Patients need to stop blaming themselves and seek proper advice and treatment. Moreover, health professionals need to ensure that treatments are providing optimal acid suppression. Why waste one more day? Do yourself a favour, take advantage of the best treatments and get on with living."

For more information on the CDHF and on acid related disease visit, www.cdhf.ca and www.yourdigestivehealth.ca.

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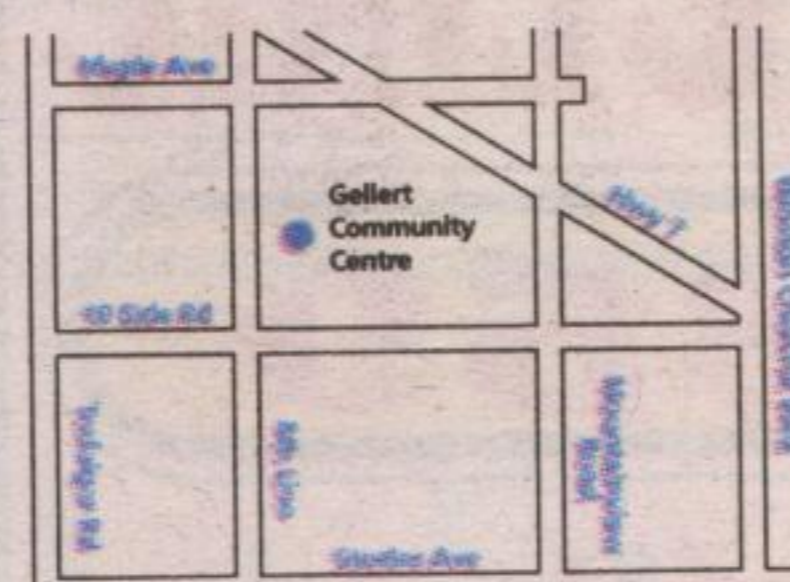
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