Deprescribing Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs)

For Residents and Families

What are proton pump inhibitors?
Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) are medications such as omeprazole, pantoprazole, and esomeprazole that are usually prescribed for heartburn and acid reflux. They reduce the amount of acid in the stomach.

Who benefits from proton pump inhibitors?
- Most patients with heartburn do not need to take the medication forever.
- Reasons to take PPIs include:
  - If you have significant heartburn
  - If you have stomach ulcers
  - If you were told that there are changes in your esophagus as a result from your chronic heartburn
  - To protect the stomach lining while taking other medications, for example ibuprofen, naproxen, or prednisone.

Why stop proton pump inhibitors?
- In the short term, PPIs are helpful to manage symptoms of heartburn but over time, side effects can develop.
- PPIs increase the risk for: bowel infections such as c. diff (which can lead to severe diarrhea, fever, and in rare cases death), pneumonia, low levels of vitamin B-12, magnesium, and iron, and weakening of bones.
- Proton pump inhibitors can also affect and interact with other medications.

Are there any other (safer) treatment options?
Yes! If you no longer have heartburn or if the symptoms are not as bad or frequent, you may not need to take PPI pills. You may be able to take medication only when you have symptoms. Antacids may be enough to control heartburn symptoms. Many patients also benefit from avoiding certain foods that bother their heartburn such as caffeine, citrus, and spicy foods. You may also benefit from only lying down more than two hours after eating.

What if my symptoms return?
If you stop taking a PPI, it does not mean you cannot go back on PPIs if needed. If your symptoms return you can ask to continue or restart your PPI.