

Drug combo may increase heart-attack risk: study

By: **Staff Writer**

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TORONTO -- A drug combination commonly taken by people who've had a heart attack actually increases their risk of having another, a new study says.

The findings suggest somewhere between five and 15 per cent of all recurrent heart attacks are caused by the fact patients are taking a combination of the anti-clotting drug Plavix (clopidogrel) and a gastric acid-reducing medication called a proton pump inhibitor or PPI, said the study's lead author, Dr. David Juurlink.

Many, though not all, drugs in the PPI class block the ability of the liver to activate Plavix. When taken in combination, they essentially negate or "turn off" the blood-thinning drug, said Juurlink, who did the research with colleagues at the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences.

He suggested patients, with the help of their doctors, should revisit their drug regimes. If they need to take a proton pump inhibitor while on Plavix, they should take one called Pantoloc (pantoprazole) which does not appear to carry the same elevated risk seen when Plavix is combined with other drugs in the class. Alternatively, they could use a drug from another class of acid-lowering medications.

"You don't have to stop taking your PPI and you definitely should not stop taking your Plavix," Juurlink said.

"But I think a sensible clinical thing to do would be to selectively prescribe pantoprazole... which we know from the basic science literature and we've sort of confirmed it in this study here does not increase the risk of a recurrent heart attack in patients on Plavix."

The study was published online by the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*.

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