

they should, although the researchers did not track how the symptoms differed between the compliant and non-compliant groups.

Part of the problem may be the medication itself, suggested the study. Some 60 per cent of the 202 patients found the timings of medication too restrictive and felt that they were unable to continuously reduce pain and discomfort over a 24-hour period. They also said the pain and discomfort could not be completely eliminated.

Another 42 per cent of patients also said they were not satisfied with their quality of life, primarily due to dietary restrictions and sleep disruptions.

Dr Daphne Ang, chief investigator of the study and a consultant at CGH's department of gastroenterology and hepatology, said on top of taking their medicine, patients are advised to avoid alcohol and a high-fat diet, which may aggravate their symptoms.

Some good news for patients is that there is a new type of proton pump inhibitor which releases the drug twice to turn off acid production in the stomach. Dexilant, approved by the Health Sciences Authority in January, can be taken with or without food at any time. Two weeks' supply costs \$90 to \$100 – comparable with brand-name versions. But this can be five to 10 times more costly than generic ones, said Dr Lee.

Mr Benjamin Lim, a 22-year-old executive in a construction company, was a GERD sufferer who could not keep up with his medication regimen as he often skipped meals or ate at irregular hours because of work. About two months ago, he suffered from heartburn so severe that he had trouble concentrating on his job.

He now takes Dexilant as soon as he wakes up in the mornings, without having to worry about his medication regimen the rest of the day.

"I have been advised to sleep on my side and now try to eat regularly too," he said. "I am glad that I have not had heartburn since."

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