

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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“Daily Aspirin Therapy Can Be A Life Saver”

Aspirin is used across the globe to treat a number of health conditions, ranging from short-term pain relief to long-term prescriptions. Significant research has been done regarding aspirin use and prevention of cancer and heart attacks. Long-term aspirin use reduces the incidence of digestive cancers by up to 47%. Those prescribed with aspirin showed a 47% reduction in liver and esophageal cancer incidence, a 38% reduction in gastric cancer incidence, a 34% reduction in pancreatic cancer incidence and a 24% reduction in colorectal cancer incidence. The effect of long-term use of aspirin on cancer incidence was also examined for cancers outside of the digestive system. Here, a significant reduction was shown for some (leukemia, lung and prostate) but not all (breast, bladder, kidney and multiple myeloma) cancers. Although opinions differ, an analysis of previous clinical trials showed that people on aspirin were less likely to die of cancer than those not on the medication, with a 37-percent drop in cancer deaths observed from five years onwards. Aspirin can help reduce your risk of a second heart attack by 31%. A recent study found that patients who stopped taking aspirin were 37% more likely to have an adverse cardiovascular event, such as a heart attack or stroke, than those who continued with their prescription. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recently recommended daily aspirin therapy if you're age 50 to 59 years, you're not at increased bleeding risk, and you have an increased risk of heart attack or stroke of 10 percent or greater over the next 10 years. Your doctor will usually prescribe a daily dose anywhere from 81 mg — the amount in an adult low-dose aspirin — to 325 mg (a regular strength tablet). Aspirin therapy reduces the clumping action of platelets — possibly preventing a heart attack. Daily aspirin therapy may lower your risk of heart attack, but daily aspirin therapy isn't for everyone. Daily use of aspirin can have serious side effects, including internal bleeding. Both aspirin and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (Motrin IB, Advil, others) and naproxen sodium (Aleve), reduce the clotting action of blood platelets. Regular use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications can increase your bleeding risk. Side effects and complications of taking aspirin include: stroke, gastrointestinal bleeding and allergic reactions to aspirin. Enteric-coated aspirin is designed to pass through your stomach and not disintegrate until it reaches your small intestine. It may be gentler on the stomach for some people who take a daily aspirin, especially in those with a history of gastritis or ulcers.

In the America that I love, it seems to make sense for older adults, who do not have gastric bleeding problems, to take a daily low dose aspirin pill.

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