



## **New Uses for an Old Medicine**

Considered one of mankind's wonder drugs, studies of aspirin continue to identify new and unique usages to benefit our health. As described last week not only does aspirin effectively provide pain relief, fever reduction and help with other common ailments, today the AMA recommends aspirin to help prevent heart attacks in people at high risk. More exciting studies are finding that aspirin can reduce high blood pressure during pregnancy, minimize cataracts, and may lower the likelihood of some forms of stomach cancer.

Although doctors and scientists know much more about how and why aspirin helps reduce the risk of heart attacks – essentially because it helps stop the formation of clots that may block the flow of blood to the heart - there is still much to be learned about how it can protect from cancers of the stomach. A study published in the British Journal of Cancer found a 36 percent reduction of cancer found in the middle or lower part of the stomach for people who had used aspirin at least once in the previous year. While this is an intriguing finding, more research and studies are needed prior to definitively pursuing daily dosage recommendations; but once again, aspirin is found to be an amazing medication.

So how does aspirin protect those at risk of heart attacks or TIA's commonly known as little strokes? Scientifically, the reason aspirin reduces the risk of heart attack is due to the body's production of 3 series of prostaglandins. One of the functions of prostaglandins is to make the lining of the stomach thick enough to stop stomach acid from irritating and penetrating the lining. Together, series 1, 2 and 3 prostaglandins basic functions inhibit blood clotting, dilate blood vessels and reduce inflammation. With more serious injuries, the prostaglandin type 2 is needed to enable platelets to stick together and this causes the blood to clot. As part of this process, swelling and inflammation is increased. This natural reaction can be dangerous if there is an excess of type 2 prostaglandins, which longer-term is linked as one of the causes of high blood pressure. Based on these scientific facts, doctors prescribe low dose aspirin for its effectiveness in thinning the blood and stopping clotting from excess prostaglandin 2.

Key to minimizing harmful side effects of aspirin is the dosage amount. While a full dose of aspirin on an occasional basis isn't harmful, taking more than 100 mg of aspirin daily thins the blood enough to increase the risk of internal bleeding and ulcers, even multiplying the incidence of nose bleeds and worse, potential bleeding in the brain. So what is the right dosage? Not all doctors agree to the "right" small amount – but most recommend what is



commonly known as "baby aspirin" which can range in dosage from 75 mg to 81 mg. Staying under 100 mg is essential because it is known that serious bleeding occurs in 5 – 11 percent of heart disease patients taking 200 mg or more of aspirin daily.

Other side effects of aspirin include gastritis or inflammation of the stomach, allergic reactions, and in some more rare cases, increased bruising and bleeding (hemorrhage) in the brain or other internal organs of the body. Side effects occur for a variety of reasons depending on the patient and their lifestyle –but essentially, the reason these effects occur is the result of a small daily aspirin inhibiting the series 1 prostaglandins enzyme.

From a nutritional standpoint, if your doctor recommends a daily low dose aspirin, eating a well-balanced diet along with mineral and vitamin supplements may help your body to regain its natural pH balance. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration advises people who regularly take aspirin to stop drinking alcohol because the combination of stomach irritants in aspirin and alcohol is a bad combination. It's also critical that you are candid with your doctor and discuss any other medications you may be taking, alcohol and tobacco use, as well as any upcoming surgical procedures – even something as simple as a dental extraction. And as with any medication, watch for side effects – if you experience a sensation of ringing or buzzing in the ears, hearing loss, dizziness, or stomach pain that does not go away, call your doctor immediately.

Along with diet, don't forget about your choice of aspirin. While brands are not important, because aspirin with an enteric coating is absorbed in the intestine, it may diminish aspirin's effectiveness. A recent Irish study in the journal "Stroke" found that the enteric coating reduces the absorption and bioavailability of low-dose aspirin, and may hamper blood clotting, especially in people who are overweight. The study's findings were that; "A 75-milligram enteric tablet (the dose typically used in Europe, similar to the 81-milligram "baby" aspirin used in the US) was equal in effect to 50 milligrams of uncoated aspirin." But this doesn't mean you shouldn't choose enteric coated aspirin, especially if you have had stomach irritation in the past. Unfortunately, there are few studies comparing coated and uncoated aspirin, and they don't always measure aspirin's effectiveness the same way. Not to mention that enteric coatings used by different aspirin makers do act differently.



Another option to consider, while it hasn't been fully studied, is regarding the combination of aspirin and Aloe. According to Dr. Robert H Davis, if you must take a higher dose of aspirin by mouth to attain the needed anti-inflammatory effect, combining aspirin and Aloe together will achieve the same pain-relief and anti-inflammatory actions but lower the toxic side effects. <http://www.aloevera-usa.com/rhdavis.htm>

Further, according to an article recently published in Runners' World magazine, athletic coaches and trainers mix Aloe gel with aspirin ... "to treat the pain and peripheral bleeding associated with muscle strains and sprains. It appears that the exceptional penetrating properties of Aloe are able to transport aspirin right through the skin, taking the aspirin directly to the bloodstream..." While combining Aloe and aspirin both topically and orally has not been substantiated in formal clinical studies, it seems to have worked for those who have tried it. Again, prior to taking any supplements, discuss with your doctor.

So whether a daily small dose to minimize the risk of a heart attack or stroke, or a larger dose once in awhile to alleviate pain, fever or minor inflammation – aspirin is an old medicine used effectively in many new ways.

<http://www.familyhealthnew.com/articles-wonder-drug.html>

[http://www.Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and risk of gastric cancer/The British Journal of Cancer/February,6,2009/Abnet et al](http://www.Nonsteroidal%20anti-inflammatory%20drugs%20and%20risk%20of%20gastric%20cancer/The%20British%20Journal%20of%20Cancer/February,6,2009/Abnet%20et%20al)

<http://www.aloevera.co.uk/rhdavis.htm>

John Mamana, M.D.  
Executive MD  
[John@ExecutiveMD.com](mailto:John@ExecutiveMD.com)  
703-260-6455