

MEN & WOMEN: PROTECTING OUR HEARTS & BRAINS

Did you know low-dose daily aspirin benefits men and women in different ways as they age?

In men, aspirin prevents heart attacks. In women, aspirin prevents strokes.

Talk to your healthcare provider about whether aspirin is a smart move for you.

Legendary drug, lifesaving remedy

Aspirin is a low-cost medicine that can prevent heart disease, stroke and certain kinds of cancer, but not everyone should take aspirin because it has side effects.¹⁻⁴ If the benefits of aspirin outweigh the side effects, taking low-dose aspirin every day is a convenient, inexpensive and effective way to keep you healthy as you age.

How do I decide if aspirin is right for me?

How old are you? Are you male or female? Do you have high blood pressure? These are just a few questions you will need to answer before deciding if aspirin is right for you. The key is to determine – for your unique situation – whether aspirin’s benefits outweigh its potential side effects.

Here’s how:

1. Determine your risk of having a heart attack or stroke—your risk depends on your age, gender, medical status and family history. You find this out by doing a “risk assessment.”
2. Determine if you have an increased chance of side effects from aspirin.
3. Find out whether the benefit of reduced heart attacks (men) and strokes (women) is greater than the potential harm from side effects.

For more details, go to the [Experts Say Aspirin Is Lifesaving](#) fact sheet.

Should all adults take aspirin to stay healthy?

- If you are unlikely to develop heart disease or stroke, you may not need to take aspirin.
- If heart disease or stroke runs in your family, or you have other risk factors, taking aspirin will have greater benefits.
- If you are a man over 45 or a woman over 55, ask your doctor if aspirin’s benefits are important enough to make up for any side effects that could come with its use.^{1,2}

ASPIRIN: DIFFERENT BENEFITS FOR MEN AND WOMEN

- Aspirin prevents heart attacks in men, but not in women.
- Aspirin prevents strokes in women, but not in men.
- Aspirin prevents certain types of cancer in both men and women.

ASPIRIN AND CANCER PREVENTION

Evidence suggests that aspirin prevents certain types of cancer, like colorectal cancer, in both men and women.^{3,4} Some researchers say that patients and providers should discuss the full range of aspirin benefits, including prevention of cancer, heart attack and stroke.

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HOW MUCH ASPIRIN SHOULD I TAKE?

- **Take one low-dose aspirin (81 mg) every day.**
- **More is not better! Taking more aspirin increases your chances of serious stomach bleeding without offering additional disease prevention benefits.**

Aspirin: not smart for everyone

Taking aspirin can increase your risk of bleeding^{1,5}

- Bleeding in the stomach (gastrointestinal tract) may result in your being hospitalized and needing blood transfusions.
- If you have had stomach ulcers, taking aspirin could cause problems.
- If you take other blood thinners, such as warfarin or Plavix®, bleeding is more likely.
- If you take aspirin with non-prescription pain medicines like ibuprofen or naproxen (Advil®, Motrin®, Naprosyn®, Aleve®, etc.), it can make bleeding more likely.
- Sudden abdominal or stomach pain can be a tip-off for serious bleeding as is vomiting blood or having black, tarry stool. In rare instances, people who take aspirin develop an unusual kind of stroke from bleeding in the brain (called a hemorrhagic stroke).

Aspirin's side effects

Like any drug, aspirin can harm you or help you. Here are aspirin's most common and serious side effects.

Mild to Moderate

- Upset stomach or heartburn
- Tendency to bruise easily
- Increased bleeding when cut

Serious

- Bleeding stomach ulcers (1 in 1,000 people per year)
- Bleeding in the brain (1 in 10,000 people per year)
- Allergic reactions: hives; difficulty breathing; swelling of face, lips, tongue, or throat (rare)

REFERENCES

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5. De Berardis G, et al. Association of aspirin use with major bleeding in patients with and without diabetes. *JAMA*. 2012; 307:2286.