

Daily Aspirin for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention

How does daily aspirin help heart disease and stroke?

You may know of aspirin as a pain or fever reliever. However, aspirin can help other problems as well. For example, taking an aspirin every day may help prevent a heart attack or stroke. You may have an increased risk for a heart attack or stroke if you:

- Are over age 65
- Have chronic conditions like diabetes, kidney disease, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol
- Are a smoker
- Have a family history of early heart disease or stroke

Not everyone should take aspirin. Daily use of aspirin can cause problems, such as stomach irritation, bleeding, and hearing loss. Ask your healthcare provider if you should take aspirin and if so, how much to take.

How does it work?

High cholesterol causes fatty buildup (plaque) in the walls of the blood vessels. Plaque increases the risk that blood clots will form and block the arteries. Clots can block the flow of blood, oxygen, and nutrition to the heart or brain and cause a heart attack or a stroke. Aspirin helps prevent blood cells called platelets from sticking together. This lowers the chance that a blood clot will form.

Aspirin is a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). NSAIDs block the chemicals in the body that cause pain, fever, and inflammation (redness and swelling.)

What else do I need to know about this medicine?

- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, naproxen, and aspirin, may cause stomach bleeding and other problems. These risks increase with age. Read the label and take as directed. Unless recommended by your healthcare provider, do not take for more than 10 days for any reason.
- Check with your healthcare provider before you give any medicine that contains aspirin or salicylates to a child or teen. This includes medicines like baby aspirin, some cold medicines, and Pepto-Bismol. Children and teens who take aspirin are at risk for a serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
- Follow the directions that come with your medicine, including information about food or alcohol. Make sure you know how and when to take your medicine. Do not take more or less than you are supposed to take.
- Try to get all of your prescriptions filled at the same place. Your pharmacist can help make sure that all of your medicines are safe to take together.

- Keep a list of your medicines with you. List all of the prescription medicines, nonprescription medicines, supplements, natural remedies, and vitamins that you take. Tell all healthcare providers who treat you about all of the products you are taking.
- Many medicines have side effects. A side effect is a symptom or problem that is caused by the medicine. Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist what side effects the medicine may cause and what you should do if you have side effects.

If you have any questions, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information. Be sure to keep all appointments for provider visits or tests.

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