

Does Aspirin Prevent Stroke?

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Does an aspirin a day really keep the doctors away?

There's a lot of misinformation out there, so we set the record straight.

Aspirin and Stroke

First off, the drug aspirin is usually used to relieve pain, reduce fever, and reduce inflammation.

In the hospital, aspirin is often administered to stroke patients in order to prevent another stroke from happening. This is due to the anti-clotting properties of aspirin.

Since an ischemic stroke occurs when a blood clot cuts off the supply of blood to the brain, taking an anti-clotting aspirin helps prevent another blood clot from forming and striking your brain again.

It can be a great preventative measure when taken correctly.

Finding the Right Dosage

This is where it gets tricky. Mark Albers, M.D., states in an article from [WebMD](#) that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work for aspirin therapy. The FDA-approved dose is 81 – 325 mg, a very wide range for you to fall in.

While you can be tested to see how well Aspirin thins your blood, this drug is best used by individuals who have *already had a stroke or heart attack* and are using aspirin to prevent it from happening again.

Aspirin can also be used if you're at a high risk of heart attack, have diabetes, or other [risk factors](#) leading to stroke or heart attack (like smoking or high blood pressure). Consult with your doctor before adding any sort of drug to your regimen.

The Risks

We have to be very careful when taking aspirin as there are multiple risks to taking this drug. The main concern with aspirin is that it increases your risk of bleeding in the gut. So if you have a bleeding or clotting disorder, you should avoid taking aspirin completely. Also, if you start taking aspirin daily and then suddenly stop, it can create a rebound effect and increase your risk of heart attack.

Yes, taking aspirin is much more complicated than many people think.

Here's what Yoon Kong Loke, MBBS, says about aspirin:

“Aspirin works in two ways... It is commonly used as a painkiller, and you need fairly big doses for that. Small doses of aspirin, which are perhaps 10 to 20 times lower than that used for pain relief, are strong enough to knock out the platelets in blood and thin it down.

The benefit of thinning the blood is that you are less likely to have clots causing strokes or heart attacks. But you can't have this benefit without at the same time running the risk of bleeding in the gut.”

The Upside

So let's end on a happy note. Taking aspirin, or any medication for that matter, carries some risks but it also offers potentially life-saving stroke-preventative benefits. If you have already suffered from a stroke or heart attack, then taking an aspirin a day can help reduce your risk of suffering from another fatal clot. But if you haven't experienced a stroke before, then be extra careful about the risks associated with aspirin. And like always, check with your doctor first.