

EXPERTS SAY ASPIRIN IS LIFESAVING

Uncertain about whether you should be taking low-dose (81 mg) aspirin? While low-dose aspirin can be lifesaving, experts say that aspirin is not right for everyone. Talk to your doctor about whether low-dose aspirin is the right move for you. And don't forget that aspirin is only one way to prevent heart disease and stroke.

Meet the experts

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (called USPSTF or Task Force) is a group of health experts who work to improve Americans' health.

- The Task Force looks at scientific studies (called medical evidence) and makes recommendations on what clinicians can do to help people live longer and be healthier.
- Their recommendations focus on keeping people healthy by screening for health conditions (such as cancer or high blood pressure), counseling to help people change unhealthy behaviors, and prescribing preventive medications, like folic acid and aspirin.
- When the Task Force makes strong recommendations, doctors know it's important to recommend these to their patients.

Daily aspirin can save lives, but it may not be right for everyone

The experts on the USPSTF investigated whether low-dose daily aspirin could prevent disease in adults as they pass milestone birthdays in their forties or fifties. The Task Force experts reviewed all the medical evidence about aspirin's benefits in heart attack and stroke prevention. They also looked at aspirin's side effects and harms.

How do I know if I should take aspirin?

The USPSTF warns that not everyone should take aspirin, even if you are in the right age range. Why? Because aspirin can cause side effects, especially as you get older. The greater your risk for future heart attack or stroke, the larger your benefits from aspirin.

- The decision to take aspirin depends on whether aspirin's benefits outweigh its potential side-effects, such as stomach bleeding.
- An important step is to estimate your future risk of having a heart attack or stroke (called a risk assessment).
- You start by asking yourself: "What are my risk factors for heart attack or stroke?" (see next page)
- The experts also suggest considering your personal chances of having side effects from daily aspirin.

ARE YOU A MAN 45 TO 79 YEARS OLD?

ARE YOU A WOMAN 55 TO 79 YEARS OLD?

Talk to your provider about taking low-dose aspirin

Also note that the age at which aspirin should be considered continues to change based on new studies

THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION IS SIMPLE

If most men 45 to 79 years old and most women 55 to 79 years old took aspirin, many heart attacks in men and strokes in women would be avoided.¹

45,000 LIVES

could be saved each year
if 90% of at-risk U.S.
adults took daily aspirin²

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What are the risk factors for heart attack and stroke?

The more of these risks for heart attack and stroke, the greater the benefits of daily aspirin.

Age & Gender

Are you a man 45 to 79?
Are you a woman 55 to 79?

If the answer is 'Yes', you may be a candidate for aspirin

Individuals 80 or older may benefit from aspirin, but caution is advised. This issue definitely deserves a conversation with your doctor.

Pre-existing Medical Conditions

- Have you had a stroke or heart attack?
- Do you have diabetes?
- Are you overweight?
- Have you ever been told you have an irregular heartbeat (called an arrhythmia) or an enlarged heart?

If you answered 'Yes' to any of these questions, aspirin may be right for you

Total Cholesterol

If you have high total cholesterol (above 200) or are taking a cholesterol-lowering medicine, consider aspirin

HDL Cholesterol

This measurement is very important – the higher the better.

If your HDL is lower than 40, aspirin may be right for you

LDL Cholesterol

The higher your LDL cholesterol, the greater your risk for heart disease.

If your LDL cholesterol is above 130, aspirin may be right for you

Smoker

We advise smokers to try to quit, but for many people it's difficult.

If you smoke, aspirin may be right for you

Systolic Blood Pressure

Systolic blood pressure is the top number of your blood pressure reading. For example, if your reading is 135/90 (135 over 90), your systolic blood pressure is 135.

If you have high blood pressure (systolic pressure over 135) or you are taking a blood pressure medicine, aspirin may be right for you

You need to do a risk assessment (next page) to account for multiple risk factors and to make sure that aspirin's benefits outweigh its potential side effects.

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Risk assessment

There are two ways to do a risk assessment:

1. CALCULATE IT

- If you are a man, you or your doctor can calculate your risk of having a heart attack in the next 10 years; go to <http://bit.ly/1j1GDBA>.
- If you are a woman, you or your doctor can calculate your risk of having a stroke in the next 10 years; go to <http://bit.ly/1cSUNAj>.

2. ANSWER QUESTIONS

You can also look at your risk of having a heart attack or stroke in the future by answering a few questions about heart disease and stroke risk in this questionnaire (<http://svy.mk/1gxlcDg>), but it's not as accurate as using the calculator tools above.

ACCOUNTING FOR CANCER BENEFITS

Aspirin may prevent certain types of cancer, like colorectal cancer.^{3,4} Some researchers say that aspirin decisions should be based on the full range of aspirin benefits, including prevention of cancer, heart attack and stroke.

Aspirin can cause problems for some

For some people, aspirin's benefits do not outweigh its side effects^{1,5}

- Taking aspirin can cause bleeding in the stomach,^{5,6} which is more likely to occur as you age.
- If you take a blood thinner, consult your doctor as aspirin may not be right for you.
- If you regularly take pain medicines called "NSAIDs" or have had stomach ulcers, aspirin has more side effects and needs to be used with caution.

Deciding whether to take aspirin

- The risk assessment (above) will help you understand your future chances of having a heart attack or stroke.
- The greater your future chances of a bad health event, the more reason to take aspirin.
- If you are unlikely to suffer a heart attack or stroke in the future, you should not take aspirin for prevention.
- While some situations are clear cut, it's best to discuss aspirin benefits and side effects with your health care provider.

REFERENCES

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