

First of its kind study in Canada looks at who is taking aspirin to prevent heart attack or stroke

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A new study out of the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry shows a large population of healthy people are taking Aspirin to prevent cardiovascular disease, despite the fact that new literature shows it isn't as beneficial as once thought.

Olga Szafran and Mike Kolber, in the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Alberta, surveyed patients over the age of 50 at two clinics in Alberta. They found that more than 40 per cent of people who don't suffer from cardiovascular disease are popping pills daily to prevent a heart attack or stroke – a practice called primary [prevention](#).

"A lot of this comes from many years ago where they did this study on physicians and it showed that physicians who take [Aspirin](#) seem to do better than those who don't," said Kolber. "The problem is, physicians aren't a generalized group of people, physicians are healthier and they're educated. All the literature that's been coming out over the last three to five years, said Aspirin for primary prevention really doesn't change long-term mortality."

Their data also shows that 62 per cent of those who have cardiovascular disease are following the same regimen. This is called secondary prevention, and this group that really benefits from a daily Aspirin.

Their findings are published in the journal *Canadian Family Physician*.

"I think the hope is that this paper will sensitize physicians to their own practice and create a growing awareness of the issue," said Szafran.

"If we can get it out there and ensure [physicians](#) and patients have the discussion, perhaps we could shift the use a little bit," said Kolber.

"Discuss the importance, if you have [cardiovascular disease](#), of taking an anti-platelet like Asprin, and probably less important if you don't have an event, to be taking that."

Provided by University of Alberta Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry

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