

Can regular aspirin use reduce your cancer risk?

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Most of us have likely taken aspirin at some point in our lives for a common minor ailment like headaches, fever or muscle cramps. Research has also shown this drug to be an effective part of treatment for heart attacks and strokes.

But more recent research on [aspirin](#) suggests it may be beneficial in yet another way—by reducing the risk of developing and dying from several types of cancer, including colorectal, lung, breast and [prostate cancers](#).

A new study presented at the American Association for Cancer Research Annual Meeting analyzed aspirin use and cancer risk from more than 86,000 women over 32 years and nearly 44,000 men over 26 years.

Ultimately, the study showed taking low dose (81 mg) aspirin for six or more years – from less than two tablets per week up to a tablet a day – was associated with a significant decrease in cancer risk, especially in [colorectal cancers](#), where the reduction was 31 percent in women and 30 percent for men.

While this data is promising, we should keep in mind it is observational. That means this data does not prove aspirin reduces cancer risk, since it's possible that people who took aspirin just had healthier habits overall.

But how does this simple, everyday medication work? It fights inflammation, the immune system's response to disease or injury. Inflammation can destroy the "bad" bacteria or eliminate injured cells,

and is usually temporary. Think about the redness and localized swelling that happens when we get a small cut or abrasion on your skin—that's the result of the body responding to the threat of foreign bacteria and sending [white blood cells](#) to the injury to take care of the potential problem.

But when inflammation is chronic, lasting for months or even years due to injury or disease, it can become a perfect environment for many types of cancer cells to develop and thrive. By blocking the body's ability to increase inflammation in the body, aspirin may help lower cancer risk or the spread of the disease.

Before you start taking aspirin, be aware that like any medication, using it comes with risks. The most common risks of regular aspirin use include an upset stomach, [stomach ulcers](#) and stomach bleeding. The risk for these side effects increases if you are older, drink alcohol regularly, or take certain other medications.

In short, while regular aspirin use shows promise for reducing [cancer risk](#), it may not be appropriate for everyone. If you're concerned about your risk and wondering if you should try a regular aspirin regimen, speak with your doctor first. He or she can help you assess whether the benefits may outweigh the drawbacks in your case.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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