

Daily low-dose aspirin may be weapon against ovarian cancer

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(HealthDay)— One low-dose aspirin a day could help women avoid

ovarian cancer or boost their survival should it develop, two new studies suggest.

In fact, daily low-dose [aspirin](#)—the type many older [women](#) already take to help their hearts—was tied to a 10 percent reduction in developing [ovarian cancer](#). It was also tied to as much as a 30 percent improvement in survival for ovarian cancer patients, the researchers said.

"Clearly, both these studies offer evidence of the benefit of the use of these anti-inflammatory drugs, and an insight into how to better prevent and treat this deadly disease," said Dr. Mitchell Kramer. He directs obstetrics and gynecology at Northwell Health's Huntington Hospital in Huntington, N.Y.

Kramer wasn't involved in the new studies, and said that "more study is certainly warranted." Still, "recommending a daily low-dose 81 mg (milligram) aspirin might be more than an ounce of prevention, as well as help for those women who have already developed the disease," he said.

Ovarian cancer is the fifth leading cancer killer of women, largely because it is too often detected too late.

According to the researchers, there's increasing evidence that inflammation plays a role in the development of cancer and can worsen outcomes. Medications, such as aspirin and non-aspirin nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)—including ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or naproxen (Aleve)—have already been shown to lower the risk of certain types of cancers, most notably colon cancer.

But do these drugs have a role to play against ovarian tumors?

To find out, researchers from the U.S. National Cancer Institute and the

Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Fla., pooled data from 13 studies from around the world. The studies included more than 750,000 women and asked them about their use of aspirin and NSAIDs. The researchers then tracked these women to see who developed ovarian cancer—more than 3,500 women did.

According to the report published July 18 in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, taking daily aspirin reduced the risk of ovarian cancer by 10 percent.

"This study gives us a new perspective on whether aspirin and non-aspirin NSAIDs can impact cancer risk. Not only does it look at ovarian cancer, which hasn't been studied before, our sample size is three-quarter of a million women who were followed for several decades," Shelley Tworoger, senior study author and associate center director for population science at the Moffitt Cancer Center, said in a center news release.

"The results of the study support that aspirin can reduce ovarian cancer risk, but further studies will need to be performed before a recommendation of daily aspirin can be made," Tworoger added.

In a second study, researchers from the University of Hawaii in Honolulu and the Moffitt Cancer Center used the Nurses' Health Studies to collect data on nearly 1,000 women already diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

The investigators found that women who used aspirin and non-aspirin NSAIDs after being diagnosed with ovarian cancer experienced as much as a 30 percent improvement in survival.

The results of the study were published in the journal *The Lancet Oncology*.

"To our knowledge, this study contributes the first comprehensive assessment of use of several types of common analgesic medications, such as aspirin and non-aspirin NSAIDs, after diagnosis in relation to ovarian cancer survival," said Melissa Merritt, an assistant research professor at the University of Hawaii Cancer Center.

"Our work demonstrates the importance of common medication in increasing survival rates of ovarian cancer, and this will encourage more studies to be conducted to confirm the results and broaden the discovery," she explained in the news release.

Both studies relied on retrospective, observational data, so they were unable to confirm a cause-and-effect relationship, only an association.

Still, the evidence for an effect does seem to be there, said Dr. Adi Davidov, who directs gynecology at Staten Island University Hospital in New York City.

He called the results "intriguing," and believes that "we can now add an NSAID to further reduce the risk of [cancer](#)."

Kramer added that "since aspirin has anti-inflammatory properties and is a relatively well-tolerated medication with few side effects, seeking its benefits for this deadly disease makes a great deal of sense."

More information: For more on ovarian cancer, visit the [American Cancer Society](#).

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