

Should you take aspirin to prevent heart attacks?

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If you take a daily aspirin to help decrease your chance of a heart attack or stroke, you should check in with your health care provider. A new report indicates the over-the-counter drug may do more harm than good for some patients.

Aspirin is a pain reliever and blood thinner, often used to reduce the

chance for [blood clots](#). This has consistently been shown as beneficial for those who have a history of heart disease or have already had a heart attack, stroke or blockages in other blood vessels. However, [blood thinners](#) can also increase your risk of bleeding and may not be as helpful for those without heart disease, or those who are not entirely aware of their family history and individual risk factors.

Adults aged 60 or older taking aspirin daily are at an increased risk for bleeding, according to the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force, and in those without a history of a prior heart attack, stroke or other blockages, this risk of bleeding may outweigh the benefit from taking a daily aspirin. There may be a small benefit of taking aspirin for younger patients (those in their 40s and 50s), especially if their bleeding risk is low, but the supporting evidence is less clear as age increases.

It is essential to talk with your [health care provider](#) about taking or stopping a daily aspirin. It is important to know your [family history](#) and other medical conditions so that your health care provider can make a proper and educated recommendation specifically for you.

The U.S. Preventative Services Task Force recommendation change does not apply to patients who are taking (or have been recommended to take) a [low-dose aspirin](#) daily after a heart attack or stroke. Others who may be recommended to take [daily aspirin](#) include those who:

- Have high blood pressure.
- Have high cholesterol.
- Have diabetes.
- Have other conditions that might increase their chances of having a heart attack or stroke.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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