



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on August 6, 2014

## British Study: Aspirin Regimen Can Prevent Cancer Deaths

In a new analysis of hundreds of previous studies, scientists from Queen Mary University of London recently concluded that if people between the ages of 50 and 65 were to take a low dose of aspirin daily, they could prevent up to one third of cancers of the bowel, throat, and stomach, and cut the risk of dying in half, in some cases.

The study recommended that those in the designated age range take a low-dose (75 to 100 milligrams) of aspirin daily for ten years, and predicted this practice would save 6,518 lives from cancer per year, along with preventing 474 fatal heart attacks. Over 20 years, the net number of lives saved in the UK would be almost 122,000, the researchers found.

Professor Jack Cuzick, head of the center for cancer prevention at Queen Mary University, reported in a review in the *Annals of Oncology* journal that the evidence showed that the benefits were not apparent during the first three years of the aspirin regimen, and death rates were only reduced after five years.

“Our study shows that if everyone aged between 50 and 65 started taking aspirin daily for at least 10 years, there would be a 9 per cent reduction in the number of cancers, strokes and heart attacks overall in men, and around 7 per cent in women,” Cuzick said in a statement about the research quoted in the *Times of India*.

The researchers cautioned, however, that taking daily aspirin would cause an additional 896 deaths from stroke, stomach bleeding, and ulcers. Despite that risk, however, the study found that the benefits of taking aspirin outweighed the potential ill effects.

Cuzick noted:

Whilst there are some serious side effects that can't be ignored, taking aspirin daily looks to be the most important thing we can do to reduce cancer after stopping smoking and reducing obesity and will probably be much easier to implement.

The wise person would do both, improve their lifestyle and take aspirin but you can't improve your lifestyle to the point that aspirin isn't necessary.

If the odds of preventing a death are substantially bigger than causing a death, then I think it is a good bet and at this stage we feel aspirin is a good bet.

Low-dose aspirin is usually packaged in 81 mg doses in the United States, and is marketed as part of a daily regimen to reduce the risk of heart attacks, by preventing the formation of clots that block blood flow to the heart. This dosage was previously marketed as “children's” or “baby” aspirin, until 1986, when the FDA required labeling on all aspirin-containing medications advising against its use in





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children and teenagers because of the possible risk of its contribution to Reye's syndrome.

Aspirin was first synthesized by Felix Hoffman, a chemist with the German Bayer company, in 1897. After years of being used as a pain and fever reliever, Dr. Peter Sleight, emeritus professor of cardiovascular medicine at Oxford University, formed a research team that conducted research into the use of aspirin in the prevention of other medical conditions. A report from PR Newswire in 2000 noted:

The "International Aspirin(R) Senior Award 2000" is being conferred today on the founders of the "Antiplatelet Trialists' Collaboration," Colin Baigent, Rory Collins, Sir Richard Peto and Peter Sleight. Scientists at Oxford University, they played a major role in the meta-analyses of clinical trials confirming the effect of acetylsalicylic acid (ASA) in the prevention of heart attacks and strokes.

Acetylsalicylic acid is the chemical name for aspirin.

Despite its benefit in helping to avoid potentially fatal heart attacks and strokes, the use of aspirin for such purposes came under fire because of the side effects it creates in some people, primarily stomach bleeding and ulcers. Because of these side effects, the FDA restricted drug companies' right to advertise the potentially life-saving effects of aspirin. This heavy-handed anti-aspirin campaign by the FDA was discussed in a 1995 article by Professor Paul H. Rubin (a contributing author to the book *American Health Care: Government, Market Processes, and the Public Interest*) entitled "The Health Risks of Censorship." The article was subtitled: "FDA's Advertising Regulations Cost Lives!"

In his article, Rubin noted that "it has long been known that a regular dose of aspirin can reduce the risk of heart attack in middle age by almost one-half. Bayer even makes a small coated aspirin for just this purpose."

Rubin wrote that 700,000 Americans die of heart-related disease and 50,000 die from colon cancer each year. Apparently, even back in 1995, it was becoming known that aspirin could help reduce the rate of colon cancer, as well as heart attacks.

But, noted Rubin:

Thanks to the FDA, many don't know that aspirin could help. Most consumers are unaware that some drugs used for one ailment may be quite effective for others. And the FDA forbids manufacturers from advertising the heart attack benefit of regular aspirin use. For the thousands at risk for heart attack, the FDA's gag order is a prescription for disaster....

Advertising [the benefits of aspirin in preventing heart attacks] could persuade many patients to ask about aspirin. This could reduce the annual number of needless deaths by tens of thousands.

Rubin continues:

This behavior is typical of the agency. It invariably places a much greater weight on any potential harm from a drug than on any benefit. This explains the tremendous delays in FDA approval of new drugs: The agency is much more fearful of approving a harmful drug than of delaying or blocking a beneficial one. The result is excess deaths....

Granting excessive power to any government agency to restrict speech is a tremendous risk. In the case of the FDA, restrictions on free speech have literally stopped innocent people dead in their tracks.

Eventually, in the face of overwhelming evidence that aspirin is effective in preventing heart attacks



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and strokes, the FDA backed off. Bayer aspirin is now allowed to post this message on its website:

Aspirin Regimen Bayer Adult Low Strength 81 mg Aspirin is recommended by doctors for use to fight cardiovascular events, like recurrent heart attack or stroke.

It is most often used by patients who are taking aspirin on a regular basis under a doctor's supervision. This product contains one-quarter the medicine of a regular strength aspirin tablet allowing you to more conveniently take the dosage directed by your doctor. This product is caffeine-free and sodium-free.

Enteric coating is a delayed-released safety coating that provides added stomach protection. The enteric safety coating is designed to allow the aspirin to pass through the stomach to the small intestine before dissolving.

**Aspirin is not appropriate for everyone, so be sure to talk to your doctor before you begin an aspirin regimen.** [Emphasis in original.]

The FDA even acknowledges the benefits on aspirin for things other than headache pain on its own website, including strokes, heart attacks, and other coronary conditions.

The FDA does add the caveat that patients contemplating using aspirin for serious conditions should "should be under the care and supervision of a doctor" — which should be self evident to anyone who has a serious medical condition.

The FDA does not list cancer as one of the conditions for which aspirin might be beneficial and it remains to be seen whether, in light of recent studies such as the one at Queen Mary University, it will advocate the use of aspirin for such purposes, restrict the right of aspirin manufacturers from mentioning this benefit, or simply ignore such findings entirely. Given the capriciousness of government bureaucrats, any of these reactions is possible.



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