

Should you be taking daily aspirin?

Taking a low dose aspirin every day can lower the chance of a heart attack. But that doesn't mean that a daily aspirin is right for everyone. The National Institutes of Health says some people take aspirin each day — but they shouldn't. The NIH has new guidelines about who should or should not take it.

WHAT DOES ASPIRIN DO?

Aspirin is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). It is a pain reliever for headaches and other aches and pains.

Aspirin also thins the blood. This can prevent clots that can lead to a heart attack or stroke. Taking a low-dose aspirin every day can be life-saving for many people.

However, aspirin also has risks. It can cause bleeding in the stomach and brain bleeding in rare cases.

NEW GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW

Researchers think many people are taking aspirin without their doctor's approval. This can mean they could put themselves in danger of bleeding or stomach problems. Aspirin can also interact with other medications or supplements.

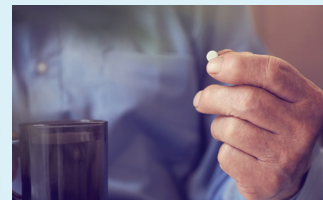
Experts no longer think everyone over age 70 should take daily aspirin. People who have a low risk of heart attack or stroke may not need it. Also, people who have a higher risk of bleeding — no matter what age — should not take it.

People who benefit from daily aspirin have a higher risk of heart attack or stroke. They may have already had a heart attack or stroke in the past. They may have a family history of heart problems or other risk factors.

THE BEST PROTECTION

If you don't need daily aspirin, you can help prevent heart disease with simple healthy habits.

- Get more exercise.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet.
- Don't smoke.
- Get regular cholesterol and blood pressure checks.



What's the bottom line?

Don't start taking daily aspirin unless your doctor says you should. And, tell your doctor and pharmacist about all medications and supplements you take.

Sources: American Heart Association, National Institutes of Health