

[IMAGE]

Aspirin: Not Safe for Some Seniors

By Editorial Staff

It's estimated that up to six in 10 older adults take aspirin daily as a safeguard against heart attack / stroke. While evidence suggests aspirin in low doses may be beneficial, particularly for people who've already suffering a heart attack and/or stroke, that doesn't mean it's safe for everyone to take every day, and the benefits might outweigh the risks. Unfortunately, we don't have much research to support daily use in the elderly population.

But we do have new research that may give some seniors a reason not to take that daily tablet. A study published in *Lancet* suggests stomach / digestive tract bleeding is more severe / intense in older people (particularly those over age 75) who take aspirin following a heart attack / stroke compared to people under age 65 who take the drug for the same reason, and the extent to which these complications caused disability or even death surprised even the researchers.

Specifically, 1.5 percent of study participants under age 65 experienced bleeding issues that necessitated hospitalization, but that percentage jumped to 3.5 percent for the 75-84-year-old crowd and 5 percent for seniors over the age of 85. And the risk of disability / death following a bleeding event was 10 times greater in study participants over the age of 75 compared to younger participants.

The lesson here: Regardless of age, all patients should talk to their doctors about the risks / benefits of any medication before filling the prescription. In this case, seniors, even those who've suffered a heart attack or stroke, should understand the potential complications of taking aspirin and discuss whether other options should be pursued. This is acutely important because evidence suggests many seniors take multiple medications (polypharmacy) and are not always well-informed of the risks / benefits.

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