

[IMAGE]

Taking Aspirin to Prevent a Heart Attack? Not So Fast

By Editorial Staff

In recent years, taking aspirin to prevent a heart attack has become more than just a recommendation for people at high risk for experiencing a cardiac event (or who've already suffered one). More and more healthy people from middle age on are taking daily aspirin as a preventive measure, "just in case." Not so fast.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, "an independent panel of experts in primary care and prevention that systematically reviews the evidence of effectiveness and develops recommendations for clinical preventive services," has issued a draft recommendation on aspirin use for heart disease / stroke prevention. According to the recommendation:

- Adults ages 40-49 who are at higher risk for cardiovascular disease (but do not have a history of CVD) should discuss whether to start taking aspirin with their doctor (not just start taking it on their own).
- Adults ages 60 and older should not begin taking aspirin for heart disease.

benefit vs. risk - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark The draft recommendation is based on a risk vs. benefit evaluation of taking aspirin. According to the task force, particularly in seniors ages 60 and older, "once people turn 60 years old, they should not consider starting to take aspirin because the risk of bleeding cancels out the benefits of preventing heart disease. The latest information also shows a closer balance of benefits and harms than previously understood."

Most people don't know that aspirin and a long list of, well, every other medication, has potential risks associated with their use. That's why nondrug options should be your first choice whenever possible; and why when your medical doctor suggests a prescription, you always ask about the risk vs. benefit and whether other options that don't involve taking drugs are available. It's your health; take ownership of it starting today.

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