

[IMAGE]

Can Occasional Aspirin Reduce Pancreatic Cancer Risk?

The pancreas is an organ that performs two important functions: It produces juices for food digestion, and hormones for regulating energy storage and use in the body. Cancer of the pancreas is highly fatal, yet little is known about ways to avoid it. Aspirin is in a family of painkillers called NSAIDs, which include ibuprofen (e.g., Advil); studies have shown that taking these drugs may help prevent colon or other cancers.

In a study in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* spanning eight years, over 28,000 postmenopausal women were classified into five categories based on use of aspirin: never; less than once weekly; once a week; two-to-five times weekly; or six or more times weekly. Products containing aspirin were also considered, such as Bufferin, Anacin, or Excedrin.

Women taking aspirin or aspirin products at any frequency were 43% less likely to develop pancreatic cancer than women who never took them. The more aspirin taken, the less likely women were to suffer from this form of cancer (women taking aspirin six or more times per week were 60% less likely to develop the cancer). Other NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen, were not shown to have protective effects against pancreatic cancer, however.

It's important to note that diabetes tripled pancreatic cancer risk in this study, and smoking cigarettes quadrupled risk. Before taking any aspirin at all, talk to your doctor about the necessity of taking it. Even drugs like aspirin, considered "safe," can have many negative side effects if taken for prolonged periods.

Reference: Anderson KE, Johnson TW, Lazovich D, et al. Association between nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug use and the incidence of pancreatic cancer. *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* 2002;94(15), pp. 1168-1171.

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