

Taking Aspirin to Protect Your Heart

What can taking aspirin do for me?

You can lower your risk for heart attack and stroke by taking a low-dose aspirin every day. Aspirin helps people at high risk for a heart attack, such as those with diabetes. Aspirin can also help people who have had a heart attack or a stroke, or who have heart disease. Taking aspirin also helps people who

- are over age 40
- have high blood pressure
- have a family history of heart and blood vessel disease
- are smokers
- have high cholesterol or other off-target blood fat levels
- have kidney problems or have protein in their urine

How does aspirin lower my risk for a heart attack or a stroke?

Aspirin helps keep your red blood cells from clumping together. Red blood cells clump together more readily in people with diabetes. When blood cells clump, a blood clot can form and narrow or block a blood vessel. Then you can have a heart attack or a stroke.

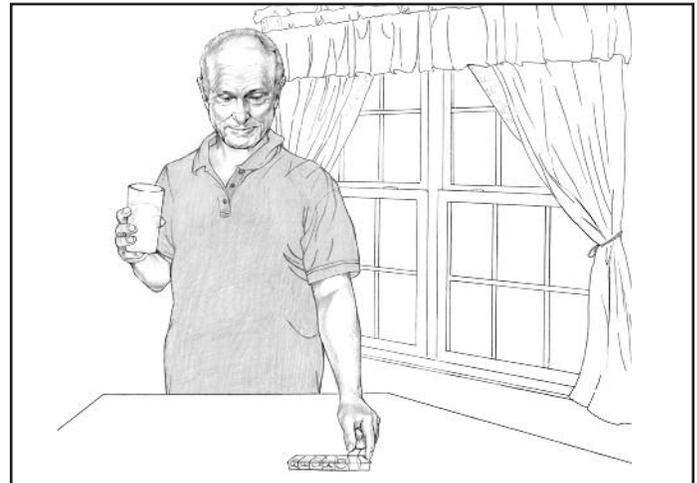
Is aspirin safe for everyone?

No, aspirin isn't safe for everyone. In some people, aspirin can harm the lining of the stomach and cause pain, nausea, vomiting, or bleeding. Ask your health care provider whether you should take aspirin.

Don't take aspirin if you

- are allergic to it
- bleed easily or have had a problem with blood clots
- have a stomach ulcer
- have liver disease or heart failure
- are younger than 21

Aspirin's effects have not been studied in people under age 30 so it isn't clear whether aspirin helps adults in their 20s.



Taking a low-dose aspirin daily every day can lower your risk for a heart attack or a stroke.

If you're allergic to aspirin, your health care provider may suggest you take a medicine called clopidogrel, which helps prevent blood clots. If you already have had a heart attack or other serious heart problems, you might be asked to take both aspirin and clopidogrel.

How much aspirin should I take every day?

Your health care provider can suggest the lowest possible dosage for you. Most people take a pill containing a dosage between 75 and 162 milligrams every day. The low-dose version may be labeled "baby aspirin."

What form of aspirin should I take?

Some health care providers recommend a form of aspirin that's coated with a material that keeps it from dissolving in your stomach. This form of aspirin, called enteric-coated, is absorbed in your intestine. But enteric-coated aspirin takes longer to be absorbed. Talk with your provider about what form of aspirin is best for you.

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