



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Pop a Pill

Use of Aspirin for Prevention of Recurrent Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease Among U.S. Adults – 20 States and the District of Columbia

Recorded: July 14, 2015; posted: July 16, 2015

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

An aspirin a day can keep heart trouble away, but many adults with cardiovascular disease still don't adhere to this preventive therapy.

Dr. Mary George is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the potential benefits of aspirin therapy in preventing heart attacks and strokes. Welcome to the show, Mary.

[Dr. George] Thank you. It's great to be here.

[Dr. Gaynes] Mary, who is a candidate for aspirin therapy?

[Dr. George] People with certain types of heart disease, people who have had a heart attack or an ischemic stroke—which is a stroke caused by a blockage in a blood vessel—are recommended to take aspirin, or another medication similar to aspirin, to help prevent another heart attack or stroke. For people who haven't had a heart attack or stroke, their health care provider may recommend that they take aspirin. It's important that people talk to their health care provider about whether aspirin is right for them, based on their own risk for heart attack or stroke and the risk of harm from aspirin.

[Dr. Gaynes] How does regular aspirin help prevent heart attacks and strokes?

[Dr. George] Atherosclerosis is a narrowing in a blood vessel caused by a fatty deposit of cholesterol, and other substances found in the blood, on the wall of the blood vessel. These deposits are called plaques and when a plaque ruptures, a clot can form on the plaque and that clot can block the blood vessel. Aspirin helps prevent the blood clot from forming and helps to keep blood flowing around the plaque.

[Dr. Gaynes] How often should a person take aspirin?

[Dr. George] For most people who need to take aspirin, an aspirin every day or every-other-day is recommended.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the potential side effects associated with aspirin therapy?

[Dr. George] Well, there could be several side effects of aspirin but the most serious side effect is bleeding in the stomach or the brain, and this is why it's important for people to talk to their health care provider about whether this is right for them before taking aspirin.

[Dr. Gaynes] How many adults with cardiovascular disease adhere to this proven preventive therapy?

[Dr. George] In a recent study, we found that, among people who have already had a heart attack or stroke, only seven in 10 were taking aspirin, and women and minorities were less likely to take aspirin. While we don't know why people weren't taking aspirin, there is room for improvement among people who have already had a heart attack or stroke.

[Dr. Gaynes] Mary, where can listeners get more information about aspirin therapy?

[Dr. George] They can go to cdc.gov and type "aspirin" in the search box at the top of the page.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Mary. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Mary George about the potential benefits of aspirin therapy.

How often a person should take aspirin varies, and some people may suffer serious side effects. If you've had a heart attack or stroke or are at high risk for one, talk with your health care provider and ask if you're a candidate for aspirin therapy.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.