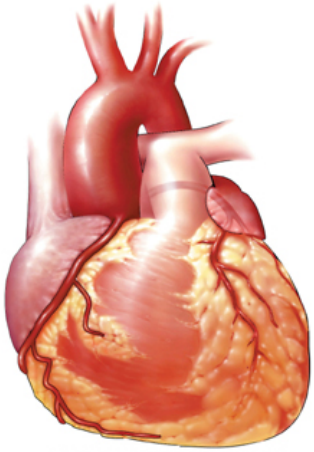
Aspirin and Your Heart

Aspirin affects the way your blood clots and helps "thin" the blood. Aspirin has many uses in heart disease. It may be used as a primary prevention to help reduce the risk of heart related events. It also can be used as a secondary measure to prevent more heart attacks or to prevent additional damage from blood clots.

ASPIRIN MAY HELP IF YOU

- Have had a heart attack or chest pain.
- Have undergone open heart surgery such as CABG (Coronary Artery Bypass Surgery).
- Have had coronary angioplasty with or without stents.
- Have experienced a stroke or TIA (*transient ischemic attack*).
- Have peripheral vascular disease (PAD).
- Have chronic heart rhythm problems such as *atrial fibrillation*.
- Are at risk for heart disease.



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BEFORE STARTING ASPIRIN

Before you start taking aspirin, your caregiver will need to review your medical history. Many things will need to be taken into consideration, such as:

- Smoking status.
- Blood pressure.
- Diabetes.
- Gender.
- Weight.
- Cholesterol level.

ASPIRIN DOSES

- Aspirin should only be taken on the advice of your caregiver. Talk to your caregiver about how much aspirin you should take. Aspirin comes in different doses such as:
  - 81 mg.
  - 162 mg.
  - 325 mg.
- The aspirin dose you take may be affected by many factors, some of which include:
  - Your current medications, especially if your are taking blood-thinners or anti-platelet medicine.
  - Liver function.
  - Heart disease risk.
  - Age.
- Aspirin comes in two forms:
  - *Non-enteric*-coated. This type of aspirin does not have a coating and is absorbed faster. Non-enteric coated aspirin is recommended for patients experiencing chest pain symptoms. This type of aspirin also comes in a chewable form.
  - *Enteric*-coated. This means the aspirin has a special coating that releases the medicine very slowly. Enteric-coated aspirin causes less stomach upset. This type of aspirin should not be chewed or crushed.

ASPIRIN SIDE EFFECTS

Daily use of aspirin can increase your risk of serious side effects, some of these include:

- Increased bleeding. This can range from a cut that does not stop bleeding to more serious problems such as stomach bleeding or bleeding into the brain (*Intracerebral bleeding*).
- Increased bruising.
- Stomach upset.
- An allergic reaction such as red, itchy skin.
- Increased risk of bleeding when combined with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicine (NSAIDS).

- Alcohol should be drank in moderation when taking aspirin. Alcohol can increase the risk of stomach bleeding when taken with aspirin.
- Aspirin should not be given to children less than 18 years of age due to the association of Reye syndrome. Reye syndrome is a serious illness that can affect the brain and liver. Studies have linked Reye syndrome with aspirin use in children.
- People that have nasal polyps have an increased risk of developing an aspirin allergy.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop an allergic reaction such as:
  - Hives.
  - Itchy skin.
  - Swelling of the lips, tongue or face.
- You develop stomach pain.
- You have unusual bleeding or bruising.
- You have ringing in your ears.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have severe chest pain, especially if the pain is crushing or pressure-like and spreads to the arms, back, neck, or jaw. **THIS IS AN EMERGENCY. Do not wait to see if the pain will go away. Get medical help at once. Call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.). DO NOT drive yourself to the hospital.**
- You have stroke-like symptoms such as:
  - Loss of vision.
  - Difficulty talking.
  - Numbness or weakness on one side of your body.
  - Numbness or weakness in your arm or leg.
  - Not thinking clearly or feeling confused.
- Your bowel movements are bloody, dark red or black in color.
- You vomit or cough up blood.
- You have blood in your urine.
- You have shortness of breath, coughing or wheezing.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will monitor your condition.
- Seek immediate medical care if necessary.

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