



Health Fact Sheet

Aspirin

Has your doctor suggested you take aspirin daily, as it is beneficial for heart health? Or maybe you've read about it in the newspapers and think it might be a good idea.

Think again. Unfortunately, so much of the information readily available around this is just hype and not backed up by research. The pharmaceuticals are quite happy to keep this one going as it translates into sales for them, and most doctors don't have the time to do the research and therefore rely on what they are told by drug company reps.

The reasons why you might be thinking of taking aspirin are two-fold – you will have read that it has anti-inflammatory properties, and you will also be thinking that it helps to keep blood thin, and prevent blood clots and platelet 'stickiness'.

Research was carried out as far back as the 1970s to test out this theory. The UK Medical Research Council did '*a most exacting test of aspirin in the prevention of post-surgery thrombosis (blood clots) in four major hospitals.*' They reported their findings in The Lancet, September 1972 – aspirin was of absolutely no benefit!

Further research was done in the United States through the National Institutes of Health, which got the same results. In fact its director, Dr Robert Levy reported that in addition to the fact that aspirin had not helped at all, it had also caused ulcer-like pain, inflammation and bleeding in the stomach and intestines, concluding that aspirin should NOT be given, due to its detrimental effects.

Further research was done on the prevention of thrombotic strokes. Stroke magazine published in 1977 and found no benefit, whilst The New England Medical Journal in 1978 found very slight benefit for men but not for women. They concluded however that due to the punishing side-effects doctors shouldn't get anyone over 40 on this regime.

Further research has followed, some of which quite puzzlingly has been declared a success and proof that aspirin works, despite the fact that close study of the results clearly shows that aspirin produces NO reduction in heart attacks or death from any other cause. Such is the state of modern science.

What has been shown to help is magnesium – in fact the major study which declared a success combined the aspirin with some magnesium!

Aspirin's side effects are well known – possible ulcers and gastric bleeding. It also has other less well-known side effects – it inhibits prostaglandins production, important hormones known to prevent both cancer and heart attacks (as well as being needed for sex hormones), and long term use can also contribute to lung disease, make asthma worse, cause nausea and vomiting, liver damage, allergic

reactions and depletion of essential vitamins and minerals. It has also been implicated in cerebral haemorrhage which can lead to strokes.

Aspirin may be freely available, but make no mistake, it is not a benign drug and is responsible for many deaths every year.

So if you want to reduce inflammation and keep your blood at a good consistency what can you do if aspirin is not the wonder drug propaganda makes it out to be? It's very simple - plenty of Omega 3 fish oils, Vitamin E, magnesium and antioxidant nutrients are all you need to ensure you take daily. They are nature's way of helping to protect the heart.