

# Taking Aspirin to Protect Your Heart

## What can taking aspirin do for me?

If you are at high risk for or if you have heart disease, taking a low dose aspirin every day may help. Aspirin can also help people who have had a heart attack or a stroke. Taking aspirin helps people who are 50 (men) or 60 (women) and have other risk factors such as:

- high blood pressure
- a family history of heart and blood vessel disease
- smoking
- high cholesterol or other off-target blood fat levels
- 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 bleeding problems
- 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 40 so it isn't clear whether aspirin helps adults in their 20s and 30s.



Ask your health care provider if aspirin could help lower your risk for heart attack and 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 have an effect. Talk with your provider about what form of aspirin is best for you.