

Article date: 2014

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Aspirin for Cancer Prevention?

In the past 10 years there have been numerous observational studies that have noted people taking long term low dose aspirin, such as a 81mg "baby" aspirin, have lower incidence of lung, esophageal, stomach, colorectal, pancreatic, prostate and breast cancer, as compared to populations not taking aspirin. In the case of breast cancer, a 2008 showed women taking daily low dose aspirin for 10 years had a reduced risk of breast cancer by 35 percent. A 2010 study followed women for 5 years after being treated for breast cancer. Those women, who took low dose aspirin 2 to 5 times weekly had a 64 percent reduced risk of dying from breast cancer, while women taking the aspirin 6 to 7 days per week, had a 71 percent lower risk.

Theories for how aspirin may be working to reduce the risk of cancer have to do with modulation of inflammation. Our immune system uses inflammation to fight infections, and to remove damaged or abnormal tissue to allow for repair. Yet, out of control or excessive inflammation actually disrupts the immune system. Aspirin may have a positive effect on the immune system by decreasing chronic inflammation. The American Cancer Society and National Cancer Institute cautions that the research is mostly observational, not standardized double blind, placebo, random control studies and so aren't conclusive. Yet, in September 2015, the US Preventive Services Task Force issued a recommendation for adults over 50 to take low dose aspirin to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and colorectal cancer.

Another concern is the safety of aspirin therapy. A daily low dose (81mg) of aspirin actually confers very little risk. Aspirin does decrease blood clotting and can aggravate stomach inflammation so individuals on blood thinners or being treated for gastric esophageal reflux should only take aspirin with their health professional's advisement.

I know aspirin supplementation doesn't seem very naturopathic. Of course, we all need to decrease inflammation in our lives by managing stress better, eating clean nourishing low sugar diets, and living less toxic life styles.

This information about aspirin is pretty impressive. If aspirin were a new prescription medication just hitting the market, we'd be hearing a lot more about this...I'm just saying. So perhaps, 81mg of aspirin may help keep little inflammation at bay and the doctor away.