

# Aspirin And Your Heart Health

(NAPSA)—Aspirin, a drug that “thins” the blood, can offer benefits in patients who are at a high risk for cardiovascular disease, including prevention of the formation of blood clots, which could cause a heart attack and stroke.

The risks and benefits of aspirin therapy vary for each person based on risk for cardiovascular disease. Therefore, you should not start aspirin therapy without first consulting your physician.

## Preventing Heart Attack

Most heart attacks and strokes occur when the blood supply to a part of your heart muscle or brain is blocked. This usually starts with atherosclerosis, a process in which deposits of fatty substances—cholesterol, cellular waste products, calcium and other matter—build up in the inner lining of an artery. This buildup is called plaque.

Plaque that ruptures away from the arterial wall can cause blood clots to form that can block blood flow or break off and travel to another part of the body and block the blood supply. This blockage is called an embolism.

- If a blood clot blocks a blood vessel that feeds the heart, it causes a heart attack.
- If a blood clot blocks a blood vessel that feeds the brain, it causes a stroke.

## Preventing a Second Heart Attack

By making it harder for blood clots to form, aspirin can help prevent a second heart attack in some patients. The dose of aspirin prescribed may be larger than that used to help prevent a first heart attack. Your health care provider will decide the right drug(s) and dose for your diagnosis and risk.

## Know the Risks

Because aspirin thins the blood, it can cause several complications. Talk to your doctor if any of these situations apply to you. You should not take aspirin without your doctor’s approval if you:



**Aspirin might help prevent heart attack for certain people—discuss your risk with your doctor.**

- Have an aspirin allergy or intolerance
- Are at risk for gastrointestinal bleeding or hemorrhagic stroke
- Drink alcohol regularly
- Are undergoing any simple medical or dental procedures.

Remember, you should not start aspirin therapy without first consulting your physician.

## During Heart Attack

The most important thing to do, if any heart attack warning signs occur, is to call 9-1-1 immediately. Don’t do anything before calling 9-1-1. In particular, don’t take an aspirin and then wait for it to relieve your pain. Don’t postpone calling 9-1-1. Aspirin won’t treat your heart attack by itself.

People having a heart attack are often given an aspirin by emergency medical services. Research shows that getting an aspirin early in the treatment of a heart attack, along with other treatments that EMTs and Emergency Department physicians provide, can significantly improve your chances of survival.

## During Stroke

Taking aspirin during stroke is not recommended, as not all strokes are caused by blood clots. Most are, but some are caused by ruptured vessels, and taking aspirin could make this type of stroke more severe.

To learn more, visit [www.heart.org/HeartAttack](http://www.heart.org/HeartAttack).