

- Medical awareness

Daily aspirin may do more harm than good

The Week (US) · 29 Oct 2021 · 21

In a significant reversal, an influential medical task force plans to stop recommending that middle-aged and older Americans take a daily aspirin to ward off cardiovascular problems. Aspirin, a blood thinner, can reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes by preventing clots. But the drug can also cause major bleeding, especially in older people. In its last guidelines, published in 2016, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force panel recommended a low-dose regimen of aspirin for people ages 50 to 59 who had an elevated risk of heart attack and stroke—provided they weren't at increased risk of bleeding. For older people, it said, the decision to take a daily aspirin “should be an individual one.” But after a review of the latest scientific evidence, the task force determined that regularly taking a low-dose aspirin to prevent a first heart attack or stroke may have only a “small net benefit” for people ages 40 to 59 who are at risk for cardiovascular disease. For those 60 and over, it concluded there was “no net benefit.” The panel said its draft guidelines do not apply to people who have previously suffered a heart attack or stroke, and that those already taking aspirin should consult their doctor before stopping. But “if you don't have a history” of those diseases, panel member Chien-Wen Tseng tells The Washington Post, “you shouldn't be starting on aspirin just because you reach a certain age.”

