

NEWS BRIEF

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U.S. Panel Says Most Adults Shouldn't Take Daily Aspirin to Prevent Heart Attack

On Oct. 12, 2021, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) changed its [guidance](#) on aspirin use, stating that most adults do not need to take aspirin to prevent first heart attacks or strokes. This change to a long-standing recommendation is based on new evidence that the potential harms of aspirin cancel out the benefits.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. As such, taking a daily low-dose aspirin has long been recommended for heart health. However, major bleeding risks drove this recommendation change. The same process that lets aspirin prevent blood clots from forming can also increase a person's risk of bleeding because it prevents blood from clotting at the wound site. Notably, aspirin can cause life-threatening digestive tract bleeding or ulcers.

The Task Force, an independent panel of 16 experts, recommends that adults ages 40 to 59 who are at a higher risk for cardiovascular disease but don't have a history of it should decide with their health care provider whether to start taking aspirin. Additionally, the guidance says that adults 60 years and older shouldn't start taking aspirin to prevent heart disease and stroke. However, the Task Force continues to recommend that people who are already taking aspirin for a previous heart attack or stroke should continue to do so unless told otherwise by their clinician.

"Daily aspirin use may help prevent heart attacks and strokes in some people, but it can also cause potentially serious harms, such as internal bleeding."

- Dr. John Wong, Task Force member

According to the latest available Harvard data, roughly 29 million adults took an aspirin a day despite having no known heart disease. Of that figure, about 6.6 million of them were doing so independently—not based on a doctor's recommendation.

What's Next?

Your health care provider can recommend prevention strategies based on your health history and any other conditions. Lower-risk options like lifestyle changes and screenings tests can help prevent heart disease in some people.

If you have questions about taking aspirin, talk to your doctor.

