

## Q&A About the Study of Association of Aspirin and Non-Aspirin NSAIDS With Cancer Incidence

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Questions and Answers Related to Study of Association of Aspirin and Non-Aspirin NSAIDS With Cancer Incidence and Mortality

What did this study find?

Regular aspirin use was associated with lower cancer incidence and cancer mortality, but non-aspirin non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) use was not.

Aspirin was also associated with a lower risk of dying from coronary heart disease, while NSAIDs were not.

The researchers also looked at whether smoking status had any impact on the potential preventive effects of aspirin and found that while these agents were associated with lower cancer incidence and mortality among former and never smokers, the same apparent benefits were not seen among active smokers.

What are the details?

Among 22,507 cancer-free postmenopausal women who participated in the Iowa Women's Health Study and provided information on aspirin and NSAID use, those who said they regularly used aspirin had a 16 percent reduced risk of developing cancer more than a decade later, as well as a 13 percent reduced risk of dying from cancer over this same time period, compared to women who did not use aspirin.

There was no statistically significant impact on cancer incidence or mortality among women who used non-aspirin NSAIDs.

Why is this study important?

For two reasons:

\* Previous studies have evaluated whether aspirin or other NSAIDs prevent specific cancers, such as breast cancer. But this study is unique because the number of patients enrolled was very large — thought to be the largest study conducted on the subject — and

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researchers were able to evaluate comprehensive endpoints such as total cancer incidence and cancer mortality, which are more clinically relevant outcomes for patients. The authors followed patients for up to 12 years and were able to adjust the results for a large number of lifestyle factors; they found little evidence that these other factors could explain the aspirin and cancer associations observed in this study.

\* Also, the different impact of aspirin compared to other NSAIDs was somewhat unexpected, the researchers say. While chemically different, these agents share at least one similar mechanism of action, the researchers say, so they expected them to have comparable effects. This adds to the evidence about how reducing inflammation can affect cancer processes.

What are the clinical implications?

The study results don't mean that women should throw away their NSAIDs or pick up a bottle of aspirin, the researchers say. However, the findings provide provocative evidence that regular aspirin use may play a role in preventing the most common chronic diseases in western countries, namely cancer and heart disease.

Excerpted from

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<http://www.mayoclinic.org/aacr-news/nsaid-qa.html>

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