

Re: baby aspirin Q

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From: Griffin (*nospam_at_here.net*)

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On 2004-07-14 06:19:41 -0400, occupant
<electronicmailfixtosend@telust.net> said:

- > *There has been a suggested regime of a baby aspirin per day that helps*
- > *prevents strokes and heart attacks.*
- > *Ideally one doesn't want to be on any medications.*
- >
- > *Reality is that if one is put on blood pressure medication, they are on*
- > *it for life and to remove oneself from blood pressure medications is*
- > *deadly.*
- >
- > *Having said all that, could one after taking a half an aspirin a day for*
- > *a while, then stop taking them or is such a regime really no different*
- > *than prescribed medications?*
- > *Any thoughts on the matter?*

You appear to be asking several different questions.

1) Does aspirin provide protection for patients at risk for vascular events (heart attack, stroke, etc.)? Clearly. You should discuss with your doctor whether or not your individual risk level warrants aspirin therapy, as it's not appropriate for everyone. Roughly 4/1000 patients treated with aspirin (even low doses, like 81mg) will experience an episode of gastrointestinal bleeding, so it (like any other therapy) is not entirely benign. However, once you get past a certain point risk-wise, the benefits (which are great) outweigh the risks (which are small).

2) Is it "safe" to stop taking aspirin once you've started? Yes, but the benefits are lost when you stop the therapy.

3) If you're put on blood pressure medicine, do you have to stay on it for life? Well, that depends. In some cases, patients can aggressively manage their blood pressure with diet and lifestyle modification, and at some point may be able to stop their medication (with their doctor's help). The benefits of blood pressure lowering to reduce the risk of cardiovascular events are becoming increasingly more compelling, and blood pressure goals are getting more aggressive. This means that more

patients are going to be placed on blood pressure–lowering medications, and more will be unable to achieve target blood pressures with diet and lifestyle modifications alone. Hypertension (high blood pressure) is generally a disease of older adults, and part of the reason it happens is that blood vessels become "stiffer" and less compliant with the buildup of calcified plaques (atherosclerosis). Since this process is progressive and (as yet) irreversible, most patients will require antihypertensive medications for life.

4) Is it "safe" to stop taking high blood pressure medicine? Again, if you stop a medication like this, you no longer receive the benefits of therapy (in other words, your blood pressure will go back up). In some cases, sudden discontinuation can actually be somewhat hazardous, as in the case of certain classes of blood pressure–lowering medications known as alpha blockers (particularly oral clonidine) and beta blockers, as you may experience "rebound" hypertension with resultant risks of stroke, etc. I do not recommend that you stop taking **any** medication without consulting your doctor.

Hope this answers your questions.