

Aspirin can protect against cancer - and treat it, according to new research

Aspirin is already used by millions to reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes. But the latest research suggests that the drug could also have a major role in treating and preventing cancer. Cheap and safe, it is the nearest we have to a wonder drug, says Jeremy Laurance. So, should we all be taking it?

DA QUI >>> If any medicine can lay claim to the title "miracle drug", it is surely aspirin. It may be known as an everyday painkiller, largely replaced today by the modern upstarts paracetamol and ibuprofen, but the range of its effects is astonishing. And our understanding of them is still growing, more than 100 years after it was discovered.

~~Millions of people around the world take aspirin daily to protect against heart attacks and strokes. Aspirin thins the blood, making it harder to form clots, helping to prevent blockages in the blood vessels. It protects against diabetes, dementia and pregnancy complications (pre-eclampsia), its anti-clotting effect proving beneficial both at the end of life and the beginning, as well as reducing pain. But the big news in recent years has been its role in cancer.~~

In a study presented in Vienna this week, Dutch researchers reported that a daily aspirin could double the life expectancy of patients with gastro-intestinal cancers – of the oesophagus, stomach and colon. Among the 14,000 cancer patients studied, regular users of the drug were twice as likely to be alive after four years as those who were not taking it.

Aspirin is already known to protect against these cancers. Now, evidence is growing that it has a role in treatment as well. Should, then, we all be on it? If a drug that has been around for so long and has been so widely used turns out not only to cut heart attacks and strokes, but also to prevent and improve survival from several major cancers – the major killers of our time – then why not give it to everyone?

Aspirin can fairly claim to be one of the broadest spectrum medicines ever discovered – a potent anti-cancer agent, heart drug, fertility promoter and cognitive enhancer, as well as reducing aches and pains and easing fevers in diseases such as flu. It may not yet be a panacea for all ills – but it is coming close.

[278 words]

<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/features/aspirin-can-protect-against-cancer-and-treat-it-according-to-new-research-a6676056.html>