

"Long before it's in the papers"

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## Low dose aspirin cuts cancer risk, study finds

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Courtesy of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine  
and World Science staff

Regular, low doses of aspirin reduce the occurrence of several common cancers, according to a study published in the Dec. 6 issue of the medical journal *The Lancet*.

But its authors cautioned that not everyone should take aspirin, as it can boost the risk of serious bleeding.

"These are very exciting and potentially important findings. They are likely to alter clinical and public health advice about low dose aspirin because the balance between benefit and bleeding has probably been altered towards using it," said researcher Tom Meade of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, who contributed to the study.

Health professionals and others will have to consider the practical implications of the study, he added.

The work, led by Peter Rothwell of Oxford University, is based on an overview of several randomised trials of aspirin. These have been primarily concerned with reducing heart attacks, but have also gathered information on deaths from cancer. The trial contributing most information to the overview was the Thrombosis Prevention Trial, carried out by Meade, who was then with the U.K. Medical Research Council.

The study confirmed that low dose aspirin reduces large bowel cancer cases as reported in another recent study also led by Rothwell, the researchers reported. Low-dose aspirin was also found to reduce total deaths due to cancer by affecting several common cancers, such as those of the esophagus or gullet, lung, stomach, pancreas and possibly the brain. Reductions in deaths are around 20 to 30 percent, the investigators said.

Aspirin doses lower than 75 mg daily and taken for at least five years were associated with the benefit, they added.

Hitherto, advice about aspirin has been mainly concerned with reducing heart attacks and strokes in those who have already had them. Those who don't have these conditions should exercise caution, the researchers said.