**Aspirin could help BEAT cancer: Daily pill can 'cuts odds of dying of breast, bowel and prostate cancer by a fifth'**

* **Cardiff University analysed 47 different studies on the humble painkiller**
* **Found it cut double chances of survival in people with certain gene type**
* **It reduced deaths by between 15 and 20 per cent in many others**
* **Experts warned patients not to take pill without consulting their doctors**

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An aspirin a day could slash the odds of dying from cancer, new research has shown.

The Cardiff University super-analysis of 47 studies revealed that the humble painkiller cut the chances of dying from breast, bowel and prostate cancers by up to a fifth.

And in those with a certain gene, it doubled the odds of survival.

Other forms of the disease are also likely to be in the grasp of the pills, packets of which are found in most bathroom cabinets and cost pennies.

With aspirin already known to help stop cancer from developing in the first place and to protect heart health, researcher Peter Elwood said that it is imperative people are made aware of the benefits.

The professor, who first showed aspirin to help the heart more than 40 years ago, said that everyone over 50 should consider taking the drug.

However, with aspirin capable of producing serious side-effects, others say people should speak to their GP before self-subscribing.

Professor Elwood searched the medical literature for trials in which cancer patients took aspirin alongside their chemotherapy, radiotherapy, surgery and other conventional treatments.

He said: ‘Our review, based on the available evidence, suggests that low-dose aspirin taken by patients with bowel, breast or prostate cancer, in addition to other treatments, is associated with a reduction in deaths of about 15 to 20 per cent, together with a reduction in the spread of the cancer.’

The results of six studies into other cancers, including kidney and oesophageal tumours, also suggested aspirin to boost survival.

And in bowel cancer patients with a mutation in a gene called PIK3CA, the pills almost doubled survival.

The powerful effects were seen despite the 75mg or ‘baby’ aspirin dose being many times smaller than that used to ease headaches.

Professor Elwood, who has taken aspirin for many years, said it is quite remarkable that such a simple drug can make such a big difference.

He said: ‘Relatively little work is done on aspirin because there’s no profit in it – you could make it in a school lab.

‘New drugs that come out are enormously expensive.

‘The breast cancer drug Herceptin cost £90,000 per course per patient when it came out, whereas aspirin costs less than a penny a day.’

It is thought at aspirin uses multiple strategies to thwart cancer’s deadly march through the body.

These range from making it easier for diseased cells to self-destruct, to making it harder for wandering cancer cells to stick to bones or blood vessels and form new tumours.

The professor said the risks of aspirin – including potentially fatal stomach and brain bleeds have been exaggerated.

And his own work shows that while bleeds are more common, they are less dangerous than usual.

Writing in the journal PLOS ONE, he said that the benefits of taking an aspirin a day ‘far outweigh the risks’.

He added: ‘While there is a desperate need for more detailed research to verify our review and to obtain evidence on less common cancers, we’d urge patients diagnosed with cancer to speak to their doctor about our findings so they can make an informed decision as to whether or not they should take a low-dose aspirin as part of their cancer treatment.’

Baroness Delyth Morgan, chief executive of charity Breast Cancer Now, said: ‘This study adds significant weight to the idea that a drug as simple and cheap as aspirin could help treat breast and other cancers.

‘Clinical trials are ongoing to confirm whether aspirin could be added to routine treatments for breast cancer.

‘Further research is needed to understand exactly which patients would benefit from aspirin and enable us to direct it to the most appropriate individuals.

‘Anyone considering taking aspirin on a regular basis should speak to their GP first to discuss the potential risks and benefits.’

Cancer Research UK urged caution.

Professor Peter Johnson, the charity’s chief clinician, said: ‘It's important we understand the risks as well as the possible benefits of aspirin. It's too early to jump to conclusions about this analysis.

‘Aspirin can have serious side effects like internal bleeding.

‘This study summarises previous research, analysing data from several studies carried out in very different ways.

‘As it doesn't compare like with like we have to treat the results with caution.’

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3550226/Aspirin-help-BEAT-cancer-Daily-pill-cuts-odds-dying-breast-bowel-prostate-cancer-fifth.html#ixzz4BkxDMlBN>   
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