Taking an aspirin a day could cut cancer risk by a FIFTH

SCIENTISTS have revealed taking an aspirin every day could cut the risk of cancer by a fifth.

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A new study shows the over the counter [painkiller](http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/health/653520/Paracetamol-no-effect-arthritis-pain-research-study-painkiller) could protect against breast, bowel and prostate cancer.

A team from Cardiff University's School of Medicine said it found a ‘significant reduction’ in mortality and cancer spread by patients who took a low-level dose of aspirin as well as their cancer treatment.

They also found that for people with a certain gene, the cheap painkiller doubled the odds of survival.

Professor Peter Elwood, who led the research published in the journal PLOS ONE, said: “There is a growing body of evidence that taking aspirin is of significant benefit in reducing some cancers.

"While we know a low dose of aspirin has been shown to reduce the incidence of cancer, its role in the treatment of cancer remains uncertain.

"As a result we set out to conduct a systematic search of all the scientific literature."

The scientists looked at all of the available data including five randomised trials and 42 observational studies of colorectal, breast and prostate cancers.

Professor Elwood added: "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 15-20 per cent together with a reduction in the spread of the cancer."

The study also found the chance of survival was double in patients with a mutation in a gene known as PIK3CA.

However, experts have warned taking aspirin can produce serious side effects and people are being advised to speak to their GP about taking an aspirin every day.

”One of the concerns about taking aspirin remains the potential for intestinal bleeding,” added Professor Elwood.

"That's why we specifically looked at the available evidence of bleeding and we wrote to all authors asking for further data.”

However, writing in the journal Plos One, he said there was no study where ‘serious or life threatening’ bleeding was reported.

As a result of the review the team said its study highlights the need for randomised trials to establish the evidence needed to support low-dose aspirin as an effective additional treatment of cancer.

Prof Elwood 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."

This is not the only significant study that Prof Elwood has led into examining ways to improve people's health.

In 1974 his team reported the very first randomised trial of aspirin in the prevention of heart attacks in the British Medical Journal.

Professor Peter Johnson, Cancer Research UK's chief clinician, said it was 'too early to jump to conclusions about this analysis'.

He said: “It's important we understand the risks as well as the possible benefits of aspirin.

"We need to do proper trials to establish whether aspirin can reduce the risk of cancer returning. This is why Cancer Research UK is running a large randomised trial, the Add-Aspirin trial, looking at whether aspirin can stop breast, bowel, prostate, oesophageal and stomach cancers from coming back after surgery.

"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."