

Stephen Kopecky, M.D.
Cardiologist
Mayo Clinic

Aspirin 411: What the New Guidelines Mean

Aspirin: Current guideline

“To reduce heart attack in men, stroke in women and to reduce cancer.”

Aspirin: Risk of bleeding

“The guidelines historically have just been if you’re over a certain age, take an aspirin. But the problem with that is that as you go through life, your risk of heart attack or stroke goes up, but as you go through life your risk of bleeding from aspirin goes up even higher. So we have to take those things into account. You have to take into account the patient’s risk for heart attack or stroke, you have to take into account the patient’s age and their risk for bleeding.”

Aspirin: Old guidelines

“Not long ago the guidelines said if you were over 45 and a man, over 55 and a woman, take an aspirin. We’re realizing that’s just not the best advice.”

Aspirin: How much to take?

“Aspirin is the biggest drug used for the biggest killer in the history of the world. Now more people die of cardiovascular disease than any other disease in the history of the world. We’ve never had a study that tells us how much dose to give.”

Aspirin: What we do know about dose?

“We do know a couple of things: if you’re having a heart attack, if you get crushing substernal chest pain, you’re calling 9-1-1 and going to the E.R., take four low-dose aspirins and chew them or one big one and chew it, because when you chew it, it gets into your oral mucosa much quicker, it gets absorbed much quicker so you have benefit in just 45 minutes. If you swallow them and go into your stomach, it takes a couple of hours. So that’s the dose you take if you’re having a heart attack or you’re worried

about it. If you just take a daily dose, then the 81 milligram, the coated ones.”