

Aspirin found to reduce risk of developing cancer

By Roni Caryn Rabin, New York Times

More than 40 million American adults already take an aspirin a day to prevent heart disease. Now many more are weighing the pros and cons of daily aspirin use in light of new studies finding that it also may reduce the risk of many cancers and stop the spread of tumors.

Six months ago Vanessa Brannan, a 31-year-old Seattle mother of two, learned she had colon cancer and Lynch syndrome, an inherited condition that increases risk of the disease and other cancers. Some of the best data on aspirin's effectiveness against cancer has been found in patients like Brannan. In one British study, patients with Lynch syndrome who took aspirin for two years cut their risk of colon cancer in half.

Yet doctors still don't know how much aspirin these patients – or anyone else – should take. So Brannan is taking 325 milligrams daily, though patients in the British study received nearly twice that amount. Her oncologist, though, recommended just an 81-milligram baby aspirin. “We kind of decided to split the difference and get as much aspirin into me as we can, knowing that higher amounts have been proven to work,” she said.

She is not the only cancer patient grappling with uncertainty. The science about daily aspirin and its effect on cancer is still in its infancy. In research studies, subjects have received doses ranging from 75 milligrams a day to 1,200 milligrams a day.

Now some scientists think low doses may work if they're taken every day; American clinical trials of every-other-day aspirin

had no effect on cancer rates at all.

Renewed interest in aspirin was set off by studies by researchers at Oxford, published last week in *The Lancet*, that found that after just three years of daily aspirin use, the risk of developing cancer was reduced by almost 25 percent when compared with a control group not taking aspirin.

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