

Benefits of aspirin for the over 70s questioned in new study

Researchers in an online study published recently by the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* argued that the benefits of giving low dose aspirin to healthy people from the age of 70 to prevent heart disease are questionable.

Using a model, the team simulated the broad implications of routine use of aspirin in a population of 20,000 men and women aged 70-74 with no cardiovascular disease. The model suggested that any benefits gained from low dose aspirin use to prevent heart attacks may be offset by increased cases of serious bleeding. The figures also indicated that the overall balance of harm and benefit could tip either way. Therefore, the temptation to blindly implement low dose aspirin for prevention of heart disease in elderly people must be resisted, said the authors.



These findings reinforce the need for a clinical trial to establish the actual benefit or harm of aspirin in seniors, and emphasize the importance of targeting preventive treatment to those who are likely to be helped most, they concluded.

SOURCE: Nelson MR, Liew D, Bertram M, Vos T. "Epidemiological modelling of routine use of low dose aspirin for the primary prevention of coronary heart disease and stroke in those aged 70." *BMJ*, doi:10.1136/bmj.38456.676806.8F (published 20 May 2005).