

Aspirin - Not Always a Harmless Pill

Acetylsalicylic acid (ASA): Americans gobble it up in tablet form to the tune of \$50 billion a year. Commonly known as aspirin, it is America's most widely used drug, both singularly and in combination with many prescription and patent medicines.

Unfortunately, most people think that aspirin is a harmless drug, though it is not. It may injure the stomach (sometimes severely), interfere with the absorption of several vitamins (especially C, K, and folic acid), and pose a special risk for pregnant women and patients with "bleeding" disorders (such as ulcers). It leads all over-the-counter drugs in causing adverse reactions requiring hospitalization. It is the major cause of childhood poisonings, as indicated by a National Safety Council report claiming that 400 children had died in one year from ASA ingestion (many from just one or two tablets).

In 1981, I authored an article warning that children suffering from influenza or chickenpox, if given aspirin, could develop Reye's syndrome (RS). This hazard was described in a publication released by the FDA as far back as 1978, and between that year and 1985, over 1,500 children died from RS. *I personally believe that the aspirin manufacturers deliberately suppressed this vital information.*

Aspirin given to pregnant women may interfere with the absorption and metabolism of folic acid in the fetus and result in such deformities as cleft palate or *spina bifida* in their offspring.

ASA has no effect on viruses or bacteria. It won't help a cold or the flu, nor will it shorten the duration of either. In fact, according to recent scientific evidence, it may prolong recovery. Aspirin used in combination with alcohol is even more damaging to stomach membranes. Not only can it cause heartburn, dyspepsia of the stomach, discomfort, nausea and vomiting, it is also responsible for ulcers with perforation and bleeding of the stomach mucosa. and membranes, and gastrointestinal hemorrhage. Considering the fact that ulcers may lead to cancer of the stomach, this is certainly an ominous reaction.

Dr. Robert Schuller, pastor of California's Crystal Cathedral landmark, reported on his Sunday morning broadcast that he had struck his head on a car door during a visit to Holland years ago. He took four aspirin for the resultant headache from the injury; this thinned his blood and caused a stroke, requiring two brain surgeries to correct a hemorrhage in his brain. Those four aspirin nearly cost him his life!

Although commonly prescribed for heart attack prevention in the United States, a *British Medical Journal* report claimed that ASA was taken daily by 22,000 MDs, with no reduction in cardiac arrest, but with an increase in strokes. Patients with high blood pressure should not take aspirin because of the propensity of this latter occurrence.

It has been estimated that one aspirin causes a loss of one teaspoon of blood from the stomach membranes. Continued and prolonged use may elicit enough blood loss to cause iron deficiency anemia. Taken in combination with other drugs (such as anticoagulants) ASA may cause severe liver damage and possibly death. It may also depress kidney function in certain patients.

Aspirin blocks the enzyme *cyclooxygenase*, used in forming *prostaglandins*, which are "hormone-like" substances crucial in the alteration of blood vessel diameter. They also elevate body temperature when infection is present, play an important role in the clotting of blood, and protect the stomach membranes from excess acid formation. Interfering with prostaglandin production may alter our body's natural response to inflammation and delay the healing process.

ASA may cause or aggravate asthma. An allergic reaction to aspirin can also lead to other breathing problems. Large doses of the medication are also correlated with deafness and tinnitus (ringing in the ears).

One question is puzzling this author: Why are aspirin and other "over-the-counter" (OTC) drugs called "anti-inflammatory" drugs, when their most serious and common side effect is inflammation of the stomach? If these drugs are not safe to take when a woman is pregnant, why are they safe to ingest when she is not pregnant?

A number of OTC drugs interfere with the absorption and metabolism of vitamin C, which is necessary for the manufacture of collagen, present in cartilaginous material and necessary for joint repair. Therefore, when one takes OTC drugs for inflamed joints, they're actually causing damage to the tissues they're trying to repair.

Another result of aspirin ingestion may be *hives*. This is not limited to ASA, however; People who are allergic to aspirin can also be allergic to ibuprofen, ketoprofen, and naproxen.

In conclusion, I remind the reader to remember the adage that "there may not be a cure in a carload of medicine"; covers up pain and leaves its cause untreated. If ASA shares a common ingredient with corn salve, which burns the flesh off your corns and calluses, the only time aspirin should be taken is when one has a "corn" between their ears!

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