A 2011 study from Newcastle University finds that patients with a family history of colon cancer were able to reduce their risk of the disease by more than 60% by taking two aspirins a day. The study, published in the journal Lancet, followed almost 1,000 patients with Lynch syndrome, a genetic condition that predisposes people to develop colorectal cancer and other types of cancer.

Keywords
Aspirin, Colon, Colorectal, Cancer, Study, Research, Fever, Pain, Inflammation, Head Ache, Reliever, Heart Attack, Stroke, Prevention, Lynch Syndrome, Placebo, Newcastle University, Inherited, Disease, American Cancer Society, Intestinal, Bleeding, Colonoscopy, Acetylsalicylic Acid, Salicylate, Drug, Analgesic, Health, Wellness, Division, Decimals, Survey, Study, Experiment, Hypothesis, Theory, Sample, Control, Control Group, Variable, Independent, Dependent, Evidence, Data, Data Set, Pattern, Data Collection, Support, Refute, Prove, Disprove
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Transcript
Aspirin Cuts Rate of Colon Cancer in High-Risk Patients, Study Finds

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:
Good Evening. When they write the history of modern medicine, including all the costs, the exotic medications, all our fancy new weapons against illness, it just might be that the most simple medication in our arsenal, the most modest product in the medicine cabinet may turn out to be the best and most cost effective and that's aspirin. It's almost hard to believe it's all we ever took for a headache or aches or pains. That was before we discovered its uses in heart attack prevention, stroke prevention, and just now the news is breaking tonight about its use against colon cancer. Put it this way, a bottle of generic aspirin, $4.29. Medical research, tens of billions of dollars. A household item that could prevent a range of illnesses, priceless. That's how we begin the broadcast tonight with our chief science correspondent Robert Bazell.

ROBERT BAZELL, reporting:
It is more powerful evidence that one of the oldest and cheapest medicines on Earth may be one of the most beneficial. British researchers studied people like Keith Reiger, who have inherited the gene for Lynch Syndrome, which puts him at very high risk for colon cancer. Reiger and his father have had colon cancer. Two of his three children inherited the gene. One died at age 22 from colon cancer. In the study, 861 people with Lynch Syndrome took either two 300-milligram tablets of aspirin or a placebo, and scientists followed them for two years after they stopped taking the aspirin.

Sir JOHN BURN (Newcastle University): We reduced by 60 percent the numbers of colon cancers in the people who actually took aspirin for two years.
BAZELL: Because the same gene that people inherit with Lynch Syndrome also plays a role in the more common form of the disease, researchers assume that aspirin might help the general population reduce colon cancer risk. But aspirin is not without its own potential side effects.

Dr. ERIC JACOBS (American Cancer Society): There are also risks, particularly increased risks, of serious gastrointestinal bleeding.

BAZELL: The ancient Greeks used the precursor of aspirin taken from willow trees. The current form was first sold in 1899. It costs pennies and it reduces fever, pain, inflammation, and cuts risk for heart attack, stroke and we now know, cancer. Aspirin has become such a wonder drug that ads now remind people its main use is pain relief.

Unidentified Man (From Bayer Aspirin Advertisement, file): Oh no, I’m not having a heart attack, it’s my back.

Unidentified Women (From Bayer Aspirin Advertisement, file): Trust me, it works great for pain

BAZELL: Keith Reiger and his family, even those without the gene, now take aspirin. But they and doctors say that should never be a substitute for colonoscopies, which can even more dramatically cut the risk for this deadly disease. Robert Bazell, NBC News, New York.