Daily Dose of Aspirin Linked With Anemia in Older People

Taking a 100-mg dose of aspirin each day was associated with a 20% higher risk of anemia compared with a placebo, according to a secondary analysis of results from the ASPREE (Aspirin in Reducing Events in the Elderly) randomized clinical trial that included 19,114 people aged 65 years or older. The incidence of anemia was about 51 events per 1000 person-years in the aspirin group and 43 events in the placebo group. Participants who received daily aspirin also tended to have a larger decrease in ferritin levels—a measure of overall iron stores—and in hemoglobin concentration over 3 and 5 years, respectively.

Anemia in older people—likely caused in this case by aspirin-induced bleeding, such as blood loss in stool—is tied to outcomes including functional decline, fatigue, and higher mortality. The findings therefore reinforce new guidelines that promote aspirin as a tool for secondary—not primary—prevention of cardiovascular disease in older people, and support regular monitoring of hemoglobin in patients who use the drug, the researchers wrote in the Annals of Internal Medicine. – Emily Harris

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Note: Source references are available through embedded hyperlinks in the article text online.