

This month...

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Did you know?

The annual Be Loud Be Clear Campaign takes place from 24-31 January. Thousands of people across the UK will have fun in the loudest and most outrageous clothes they can find, whilst raising funds and awareness for Beating Bowel Cancer.

Bowel cancer is the third most common cancer in the UK with over 38,000 people diagnosed each year.

Most bowel cancers start as benign growths on the wall of the bowel, called polyps. Most polyps do not produce symptoms and are not cancerous. If detected, they can usually be easily removed.

However, one type of polyp called an adenoma can become cancerous (malignant) and if left undetected the cancer

"Welcome to the January issue of Preventicum E-news.

Happy New Year to you all!

This month we are focusing on the recent stories in the press about aspirin. We hope you find our article informative but if you have any queries or concerns, please [contact us](#).

Please remember to [forward E-news](#) to your friends, family and colleagues!"

Dr Garry Savin, Medical Director



Aspirin: Wonder drug or media hype?

You have probably heard many confusing news stories in the press over the last year following the publication of some research in the medical journal "the Lancet." The pros and cons of taking aspirin has been a raging debate in medical circles for at least the last two

decades and some cardiologists have hailed it as a wonder drug whereas many gastroenterologists "tut " and raise their eyebrows at its very mention. Many people take or have been prescribed aspirin by their doctors in the hope that it may help to protect them against early heart disease or a stroke and last year a major analysis of several big medical trials was published based on studies involving very large numbers of people to try to provide some answers.



cells will multiply to form a tumour in the bowel. The earlier bowel cancer is caught, the easier it is to treat.

Preventicum offers an MRI colonoscopy, which can detect bowel polyps and colonic tumours in their very early stages. If you would like further information or would like to arrange a Check-Up please contact us.

Tip of the month

National Obesity Week 2011 (NOW), run by the National Obesity Forum, takes place this month.

Research has highlighted that nearly half of all adults have an inaccurate picture of their own weight. The aim of the campaign is to encourage individuals to establish if they are underweight, a healthy weight, overweight or obese. Once identified, those that are not a healthy weight will be encouraged to take action.

Ideally your body mass index (BMI) should be between 20-25. However, about a quarter of all adults are now obese (BMI>30) and the numbers are rising. Research has shown that being overweight or obese increases the risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and cancer.

Here at Preventicum we

Aspirin and cardiovascular disease

1. Those people with no known heart disease or stroke

A large meta-analysis study combining 6 studies looked at data involving 95,000 people considered at low average risk of heart disease taking aspirin to try to prevent cardiovascular disease (heart attack and stroke). The results showed that those taking aspirin had a slightly reduced chance of serious vascular disease, mainly in non-fatal heart attacks, but showed no worthwhile protection against stroke or death compared to those taking a dummy tablet. However, the downside was that those people taking aspirin had an increased chance of problems e.g.bleeding (stomach bleeds etc.) so as to practically cancel out the potential benefits of aspirin.

Therefore, a clear worthwhile benefit from taking a small daily aspirin is uncertain in people with no known existing cardiovascular disease, as the protective effects need to be weighed against an increase in major bleeds. Aspirin does not seem to protect against death or stroke in this group so on balance is probably not worth taking.

Other studies suggest that this is still the case even if one has high blood pressure or diabetes.

2. Those with known heart disease or stroke

These big studies showed that in this group of people, taking low dose aspirin remains of net benefit and is recommended.

Those people with known heart disease or who have suffered a stroke should take a daily aspirin as the benefits outweigh the risks.

Aspirin and cancer protection

At the end of 2010, another proverbial cat was set amongst the pigeons when further analysis of scientific studies including some 25,000 people taking long term aspirin for cardiovascular protection was published in the Lancet announcing a 21% reduction in the risk of dying of cancer in those taking daily aspirin and was widely reported in the media as some sort of medical breakthrough. Although this sounds impressive as a percentage, what the data shows is that the benefit is actually very small in real terms. Around 147 people would have to take aspirin for at least 5 years to prevent one death from cancer. So in this group 146 people would have taken the aspirin over 5 years for no benefit as regards cancer death but all would be exposed to the potential harms of aspirin, which was not analysed in this patient group.

The studies showed that a daily dose of 75mg of aspirin needed to be taken for at least 5 years to show any

calculate BMI, body fat percentage and waist circumference for all clients undertaking Check-Ups. We can offer advice and suggest ways to lose any excess weight and also have a resident dietitian, Becky Stephenson.

If you would like further information or would like to arrange a Check-Up please contact us.

Watch our movie



Client Testimonials

"In 2010, we selected Preventicum as one of our preferred providers for executive screening. We were very impressed with their programme; a health assessment at Preventicum can help to identify any future risk as well as current health problems, giving both the employee and BP useful guidance. To date, the Preventicum team has been extremely helpful, ensuring all our administrative and medical needs have been met efficiently."

**Angela Whitehead,
UK OH Manager,
BP International Limited**

benefit. The benefit was greater for gastro-intestinal cancers than all other cancers and varied depending on cancer type. Aspirin had no benefit at all on some cancers eg blood cancers. The benefits increased with age and those under 55 appeared to have no benefit and those over 65 had the greatest benefit.

Conclusion

1. If you have not suffered a heart attack or stroke and do not have known heart disease then the benefits and risks of taking aspirin are probably similar and largely cancel each other out. The advice, therefore, is not to take it.

2. For those with known cardiovascular disease e.g. who have suffered a heart attack or stroke, there seems to be a worthwhile reason to take aspirin as the statistical benefits outweigh the risks.

3. There seems to be a relative protective effect against the risk of dying of cancer, particularly gastrointestinal malignancies, in people who take long term aspirin but the actual benefit is very small in real terms and the majority of people taking it will not experience a benefit. The aspirin needs to be taken daily for at least 5 years and works best in older people but again there are risks to taking aspirin which were not fully evaluated.

This is an overview of the recent published scientific trials looking at aspirin use as protection against disease.

The decision whether one should or should not take aspirin should always be a joint doctor-patient calculated decision as there can be other confounding factors to take into consideration.

Please note: Aspirin use generally refers to a daily dose of 75mg in this article. Remember that the beneficial effects of regular consistent exercise on health are far superior to any medicine.

If you require further information, please [contact us](#).



Preventicum
Shepherds West
Rockley Road
London W14 0DA

T: +44 (0)20 7605 6900
F: +44 (0)20 7605 6901
E: enews@preventicum.co.uk
W: www.preventicum.co.uk

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