

Low Dose Aspirin Can Aid In Stroke Survival

Each year, about 700,000 Americans experience a new or recurrent stroke.

Although survival rates of stroke victims have increased in recent years, stroke is the leading cause of long-term adult disability and remains the third-leading cause of death in the United States.

People can combat these statistics by speaking with their doctors about appropriate lifestyle measures, such as daily low-dose aspirin therapy, to help prevent the occurrence of a cardiac event.

While results from the Antiplatelet Trialists' Collaboration indicated that 14 percent of people who survive a first stroke would have another within one year, findings from the same study also suggested that long-term aspirin therapy, such as with 81 milligram aspirin, greatly reduces recurrent strokes by 25 percent.

In the Second International Study of Infarct Survival involving more than 17,000 men and women, findings suggested that low-dose aspirin specifically reduced patients' risk of experiencing a non-fatal stroke by 46 percent.

"Research continually supports the use of low-dose aspirin in the prevention of stroke without the increased side effect of stomach bleeding associated with higher doses of aspirin, such as 325 milligrams," says Dr. Jayne Middlebrooks, non-invasive cardiolo-

gist and director of HealthScreen America in Atlanta, Ga.

"An aspirin a day keeps the doctor away, and this adage is particularly true for adults at an increased risk of a first or recurrent stroke."

A stroke occurs when a blood clot blocks a blood vessel or artery or a blood vessel breaks, interrupting blood flow to an area of the brain.

At the onset of a stroke, people may experience numbness or weakness on one side of their body, possibly accompanied by blurred vision, slurred speech or a sudden, severe headache.

It's crucial to call 911 as soon as symptoms arise as it could mean the difference between life and death.

Typically, stroke survivors' control of such functions as speech, movement and memory may be lost. Specific abilities lost or affected depend on the size, severity and location in the brain of the stroke.

Men and women, especially those diagnosed with high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes, are encouraged to discuss with their doctors whether a daily low-dose aspirin regimen with 81 milligram is right for them.



Tips For Lowering Your Prescription Costs

Whether around election time or throughout the year, health care is almost always a hot-button issue. Typically, escalating healthcare costs, and how to cap them for the benefit of all citizens, rest at the heart of the debate.

That health care is a topic of concern for so many should come as no surprise. According to data released in late summer of 2006, 46.6 million Americans were without health care in 2005. That's roughly 16 percent of the entire population, by far the largest number of uninsured citizens in the country's history. Among those uninsured are 8.3 million children, adding fuel to

the fire that health care in the U.S. is in need of reform.

Even those who have health insurance are often forced to make difficult decisions, ones dictated by cost rather than personal preference, convenience or, in some instances, need. Oftentimes, prescriptions can present a huge problem to those in need, as prescriptions are often an ongoing necessity, as opposed to a trip to the emergency room or a yearly visit to the physician. A variety of options exist to pare down prescription costs.

• Buy generic medications: Patients should be aware, however, that doctors often prescribe the

designer drugs, and typically must be asked to prescribe generic versions. Unless your prescription is marked DAW (dispense as written), a pharmacist will substitute the generic form.

• Ask for samples: In an effort to get physicians to prescribe their medications, many companies provide free samples to doctors. For short-term illnesses, some doctors may provide their patients with enough free samples to last the duration of the illness. It's important for patients to know as well that they're not guinea pigs in this scenario, where the drugs are being tested on them. All drugs

must pass rigorous testing before they can be given out to the public. Samples can also be a good way to see what your reaction will be to a given drug before you go and fill an entire prescription.

• Inquire about expiration dates: Many a debate has gone on concerning the validity of prescription drug expiration dates. Some consumer advocacy groups have found that these expiration dates are often meaningless and that drugs can be taken long after their listed expiration date. However, anyone considering this should consult their physician first and foremost.

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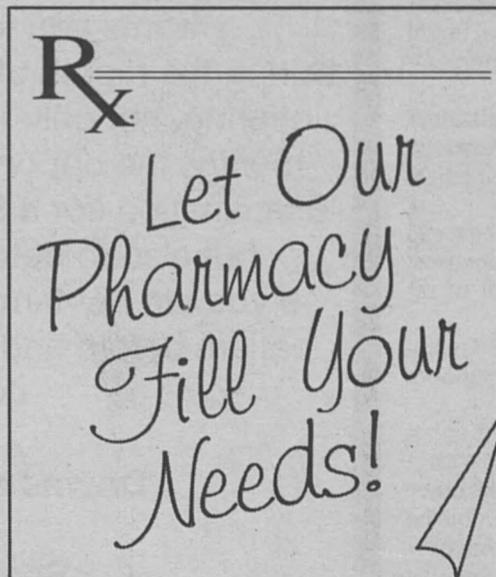
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Medicines Prescribed for Psoriasis

Psoriasis is a chronic skin condition in which there is rapid turnover of cells. Health researchers have determined that inappropriate functioning of the immune system leads to this condition. A type of white blood cell known as the T cell becomes overactive, leading to rapid cell turnover.

A build-up of skin cells results in thick silvery scales. The scales may cover red patches of skin. Other symptoms of psoriasis may include dry skin, thickened nails, and stiff joints. The severity of this condition may range from only a small affected area to a large area of scaling. Factors that may trigger T cell malfunction include infections, injury, stress, and certain drugs, such as lithium and certain medications for high blood pressure.

Topical steroids are prescribed for the treatment of mild to moderate psoriasis. They work by slowing cell turnover, thereby reducing inflammation.

Calcipotriene (Dovonex) is a vitamin D analogue prescribed as a cream, ointment, or solution for the treatment of psoriasis. For treatment of severe psoriasis, oral or injected medications may be prescribed. Methotrexate, azathioprine, and cyclosporine are oral drugs that may be prescribed to reduce inflammation. Immune modulator drugs, such as etanercept (Enbrel) and infliximab (Remicade) are sometimes given.