Low daily doses of aspirin reduce risk of colorectal cancer, but further research needed.

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Aspirin has become a popular treatment for more than just aches and pains. Studies showing a relationship between daily doses of the drug and a reduced risk of heart attacks brought new attention to an old drug. This positive effect, however, was accompanied by an important negative: an increased risk of gastrointestinal bleeding. Patients had to weigh the risks against the benefits to determine whether or not to partake in a daily aspirin regimen. A new study done in England, however, reveals an additional positive effect. Daily doses of aspirin for 5 years or more are linked with a significant decrease in the incidence of colorectal cancer. Researchers hypothesize that aspirin may have similar preventative effects against other cancers, especially gastrointestinal malignancies. Patients should discuss these issues with their physicians before making any decisions about whether or not to begin a daily regimen.

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