



Gastrointestinal bleeding risk in aspirin users for preventing heart issues

Between 2016 and 2020, a study in the US published in the American Journal of Medicine looked at whether taking aspirin to prevent heart issues affected the chances of bleeding in the stomach. They studied over half a million adults aged 45 and older who went to the emergency room due to this type of bleeding.

The key findings were:

1. The number of cases of stomach bleeding in people using aspirin to prevent heart issues went up from 7.5 to 10 cases per 100,000 people each year.
2. The highest rates of bleeding were seen in those older than 75, going from 20.4 to 31.6 cases per 100,000 people.
3. More people who experienced stomach bleeding were using aspirin for prevention in 2020 compared to 2016.
4. Those taking aspirin for prevention had higher chances of needing hospital care, procedures like endoscopy, and blood transfusions if they had stomach bleeding.

In simple terms, this study discovered that between 2016 and 2020, more people taking aspirin to prevent heart issues experienced stomach bleeding. This risk was particularly higher in older individuals. Those who faced bleeding and were taking aspirin for prevention needed more medical attention, such as hospital stays and procedures.

Understanding digital self-harm: risks, impact, and support strategies

STAR HEALTH DESK

Digital self-harm might sound puzzling, but it is a serious form of cyberbullying where individuals post hurtful comments or threats about themselves online. The difference from typical cyberbullying is that this behaviour targets the person themselves. It is not just a harmless act—it can have a significant impact on mental and physical well-being. In some cases, it might even signal a risk of suicide. Here is what you need to know about digital self-harm:

What it looks like: This harmful behaviour occurs on various social media platforms where users can share words, images, or videos. The person usually posts anonymously or under a fake name in a public space, allowing others to see it. They might make mean comments about themselves, body-shame, or say degrading things.

How it affects you: Engaging in digital self-harm can chip away at self-esteem and trigger conditions like depression or anxiety. It is a complex situation—sometimes, mental health issues lead someone to post hateful comments, while at other times, posting those comments might worsen existing mental health challenges.

Who is at risk: While research in this area is limited, studies suggest that teens and adolescents are more likely to engage in digital self-harm. Factors like gender, sexual orientation, and disability might influence the likelihood of this behavior. Those with past depressive symptoms or existing mental health conditions are also at higher risk.

Reasons behind it: Motivations for digital self-harm vary widely, ranging from seeking attention or sympathy to testing if anyone cares. Boys might do it as a joke, while girls often seek sympathy or reassurance.



Health impact: It can severely affect both physical and emotional health, including self-esteem and confidence. Additionally, it is often linked to more serious mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts or attempts.

How to address it: If you suspect someone is engaging in digital self-harm, there are steps to intervene. This includes blocking harmful accounts, monitoring internet activity, reporting concerning content, seeking professional help, fostering open communication, and educating about mental health resources.

Prevention: Promoting a safe and supportive environment, encouraging dialogue about mental health, and creating avenues for reporting such behaviour are crucial preventive measures.

Promoting a positive online culture: Encouraging positive interactions and empathy in online spaces can help counter digital

self-harm. Teaching and practicing kindness, respectful communication, and supporting peers can create a more supportive online environment, reducing the likelihood of harmful behaviours like self-bullying.

The role of support systems: Having a strong support system can be pivotal in combating digital self-harm. Encouraging open conversations, fostering an environment of trust, and being attentive to any behavioural changes in friends or family members can make a significant difference. Being there to listen without judgement and guiding individuals towards professional help when needed can aid in addressing this concerning behaviour.

Understanding digital self-harm is the first step in combating it. By providing support, guidance, and access to mental health resources, we can work together to prevent this harmful behaviour and support those affected.

HAVE A NICE DAY Skipping the sparkle - Part II

DR RUBAUL MURSHED

In today's world, shopping has become an everyday activity. However, when shopping becomes uncontrollable, it is important to determine if it is just a habit or a genuine problem. Especially while travelling, some individuals prioritise shopping over appreciating the beauty of nature.

Instead of striking a balance between both activities, their primary focus tends to be on shopping, overshadowing their ability to appreciate the surrounding beauty and truth. Being in nature, or even viewing scenes of nature, not only improves emotional well-being but also has physical benefits such as reducing anxiety and blood pressure, lowering heart rate, relieving muscle tension, and decreasing stress hormone production.

These days, people are travelling and shopping in foreign countries more frequently with their disposable income.

City shopping is preferable to mountain or seaside sightseeing for these spenders. Shopping can often provide temporary moments of joy. However, these mixed emotions may lead to anxiety or guilt, which, in turn, may drive one to shop more.

Consumer culture moulds our identity and induces concern about personal will. It is a disturbing reality. Social scientists reveal that it urges us to define ourselves through purchases, fostering an unhealthy attachment. Let us find better ways to spend our free time, free from disruptive ads.

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Understanding COVID-19 medication rebound concerns

A couple of medications, Nirmatrelvir/Ritonavir (Paxlovid) and Molnupiravir, are recommended for treating mild-to-moderate COVID-19. They have been helpful in reducing hospitalisations and deaths. However, there has been a hesitation in using these drugs, partly because some folks worry they might cause COVID-19 symptoms to come back after recovery.



return of symptoms or a positive COVID-19 test after getting better. They also checked two trials where one group got the treatment and the other did not.

The findings were reassuring. They did not find strong evidence that these medications caused the return of symptoms or a positive COVID-19 test after recovery. When a return of symptoms did happen, it tended to affect people who were already dealing with other

health issues or whose immune systems were not working as well. Importantly, this rebound was not connected to higher chances of ending up in the hospital or facing a higher risk of dying.

The CDC recently looked at this concern. They studied data from several research projects comparing people who used these drugs to those who did not to see if there was any link between the medications and a

WHO prequalifies a second malaria vaccine, a significant milestone in the prevention of the disease

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has added the R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccine to its list of prequalified vaccines. In October 2023, WHO recommended its use for the prevention of malaria in children, following the advice of the WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunisation and the Malaria Policy Advisory Group. The prequalification means larger access to vaccines as a key tool to prevent malaria in children, with it being a prerequisite for vaccine procurement by UNICEF and funding support for deployment by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

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The R21 vaccine is the second malaria vaccine prequalified by the WHO, following the RTS,S/AS01 vaccine, which obtained prequalification status in July 2022. Both vaccines have been shown to be safe and effective in clinical trials for preventing malaria in children.

When implemented broadly, along with other recommended malaria control interventions, they are expected to have a high public health impact. Malaria, a mosquito-borne disease, places a particularly high burden on children in the African Region, where nearly half a million children die from the disease each year. Globally, in 2022, there were an estimated 249 million malaria cases and 608,000 malaria deaths across 85 countries.

The prequalification of the world's second malaria vaccine, developed by Oxford University and manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, is poised to expand access to malaria prevention through vaccination. Demand for malaria vaccines is high, but the supply has thus far been limited. The availability of two WHO recommended and prequalified malaria vaccines is expected to increase supply to meet the high demand from African countries and result in sufficient vaccine doses to benefit all children living in areas where malaria is a significant public health risk.

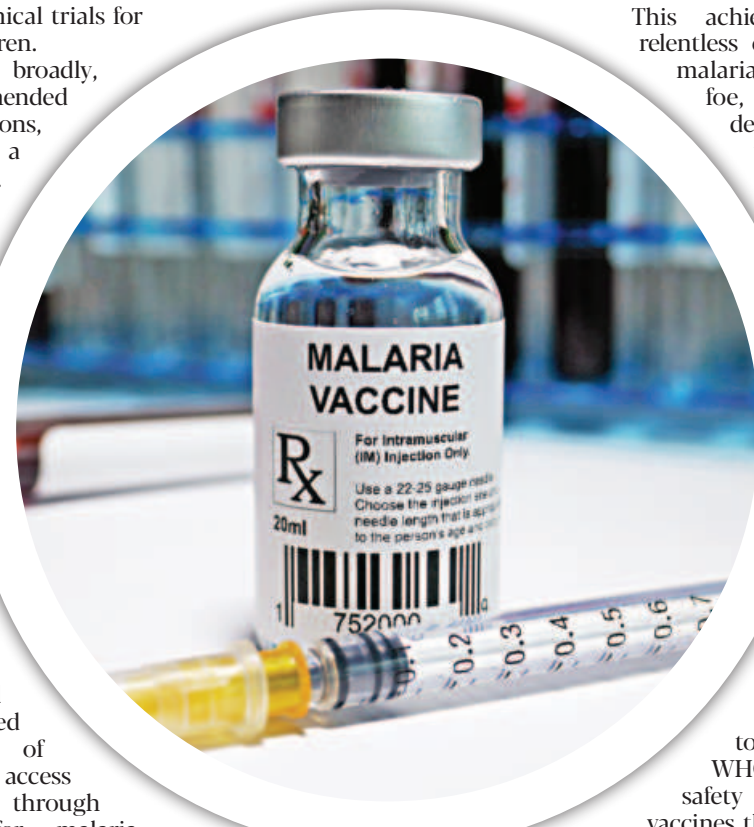
Dr Rogério Gaspar, Director of the Department of Regulation and Prequalification at WHO, said: "Achieving WHO vaccine prequalification ensures that vaccines used in global immunisation programmes

are safe and effective within their conditions of use in the targeted health systems. WHO evaluates multiple products for prequalification each year, and the core of this work is ensuring greater access to safe, effective, and quality health products."

Dr Kate O'Brien, Director of WHO's Department of Immunisation, Vaccines, and Biologicals, said: "Today marks a huge stride in global health as we welcome the prequalification of R21/Matrix-M, the second malaria vaccine recommended for children in malaria-endemic areas. This achievement underscores our relentless commitment to wiping out malaria, which remains a formidable foe, causing child suffering and death. This is another step towards ensuring a healthier, more resilient future for those who have lived for too long in fear of what malaria could do to their children. Together with our partners, we are united in the pursuit of a malaria-free future where every life is shielded from the threat of this disease."

As part of the prequalification process, WHO applies international standards to comprehensively evaluate and determine whether vaccines are safe, effective, and manufactured to international standards. WHO also ensures the continued safety and efficacy of prequalified vaccines through, for example, regular re-evaluation, site inspection, and targeted testing.

Source: World Health Organisation



Managing muscle health as we age

As we age, our bodies undergo various changes, and one significant concern for many is the gradual loss of muscle mass and function known as sarcopenia. From around the age of 30, muscles tend to grow weaker and smaller, a process that accelerates beyond age 75 but can begin earlier or later in some individuals. This decline can lead to symptoms like weakness, reduced stamina, and difficulties with physical activities, impacting mobility and increasing the risk of falls and fractures in older adults.

Sarcopenia is not solely caused by age; it is also influenced by factors such as reduced nerve signaling to muscles, hormonal changes (like decreased growth hormone and testosterone levels), and a decreased ability to convert protein into energy. Even individuals who remain physically active may experience some muscle loss, though the rate might be slower compared to those who are inactive. While there is not a specific test to diagnose sarcopenia, any noticeable loss of muscle mass is significant because it affects strength and mobility.

To counteract sarcopenia, engaging in regular exercise—especially resistance or strength training—is crucial. These exercises, involving weights or resistance bands, help build muscle strength and endurance. The right exercise regimen, in terms of intensity and frequency, is essential for maximum benefit and minimal risk of injury.



Collaborating with a physical therapist or trainer to develop a tailored exercise plan can be immensely beneficial. Interestingly, even within as little as two weeks, resistance training can improve an older adult's ability to convert protein into energy.

Additionally, maintaining a balanced diet with adequate calories and protein is crucial for preserving muscle mass. Ensuring the body receives the necessary nutrients can help combat sarcopenia. Understanding sarcopenia empowers individuals to take proactive steps to mitigate its effects.

By staying physically active, engaging in resistance training, and prioritising proper nutrition, it is possible to slow down the progression of muscle loss and maintain strength and mobility as we age.