Rationale for Aspirin Use by High-risk Individuals

Patients with heart disease or who have had a stroke in the past are at high risk for having a heart attack or another stroke. Substantial PCOR evidence shows that taking an aspirin every day can help these patients lower their risk. For patients with heart disease, including those who have angina or have been treated for blocked arteries, taking aspirin can prevent them from having a heart attack. For people who have already had a heart attack or stroke, aspirin use can prevent another heart attack or stroke.

Findings from PCOR

In 2011, the American Heart Association (AHA) and the American College of Cardiology Foundation (ACCF) used this PCOR evidence to develop guidelines on aspirin use in patients with heart disease and others who are at risk of heart attack or stroke (Smith, 2011).

- The panel recommends long-term low-dose aspirin therapy (75 to 100 mg daily) for patients with heart disease. For patients intolerant or allergic to aspirin, clopidogrel (75 mg daily) can be used as an alternative.

Evidence-based guidelines from the American College of Chest Physicians make the same recommendation (Vandvik, 2012).

Evaluating and Measuring Use of PCOR-supported Recommendations

- The measure used by EvidenceNOW to evaluate aspirin use assesses the percentage of patients with heart disease (including those with angina and those who have been treated for blocked arteries), patients with a history of a heart attack, and patients with a history of a stroke who use aspirin or a similar drug. This measure has been endorsed by the National Quality Forum and is used by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

- The EvidenceNOW goal is to have at least 70 percent of eligible patients cared for in primary care practices use aspirin.
Additional Tools and Resources

- [Talk with Your Doctor about Taking Aspirin Every Day](http://healthfinder.gov), a resource from Healthfinder.gov, offers an overview for patients about using aspirin to reduce the risk of heart attack or stroke. Information provided includes the benefits and risks of aspirin use and what to discuss with a doctor.

PCOR Evidence Sources


About EvidenceNOW

EvidenceNOW is an Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality grant initiative dedicated to helping small- and medium-sized primary care practices across the country use the latest evidence to improve the heart health of millions of Americans. The initiative is focusing on the ABCS of heart health—Aspirin use by high-risk individuals, Blood pressure control, Cholesterol management, and Smoking cessation—while helping primary care practices improve their capacity to use new PCOR evidence to improve the care they deliver.

[www.ahrq.gov/evidencenow](http://www.ahrq.gov/evidencenow)