



National Prescribing Service Limited

MEDIA RELEASE

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Women warned aspirin reports may be misleading

Recent research from the US suggests women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer may benefit from taking aspirin but the National Prescribing Service (NPS) warns people to talk to their health professional before self-medicating.

The study, published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, has received significant media attention, with some reports suggesting aspirin could be a miracle treatment.

NPS CEO, Dr Lynn Weekes says such media reports are concerning and people should not underestimate the strength or effectiveness of a medicine just because it can be purchased without a prescription.

“Like all medicines, aspirin has benefits but it also has potential harms. Aspirin is a salicylate drug, commonly used to relieve minor aches and pains, reduce fever, and as an anti-inflammatory agent,” Dr Weekes said.

“Aspirin also has a blood-thinning effect and can therefore increase the risk of bleeding, which can be dangerous for people already taking anticoagulants. For people with asthma it can trigger attacks if they are sensitive to this type of medicine.”

“If you are taking other medicines, particularly cancer treatments, it’s important to always talk to your doctor before starting a new medicine. This includes medicines that can be bought without a prescription or from an outlet such as a supermarket where you will not receive clinical advice.”

The study was conducted on 4164 female registered nurses in the US with a diagnosis of breast cancer between 1976 and 2002.

Dr Weekes said the results may not be generalised for all women and recommends people talk to their doctor or pharmacist about whether aspirin is the best medicine for their personal condition.

Consumers with questions about medicines can call the [NPS Medicines Line](tel:1300888763) on 1300 888 763 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm EST) and talk to a pharmacist for the cost of a local call (mobiles may cost more).

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