

Why aspirin may help to prevent recurrences

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An old tip is validated

One of the tips that the Herpes Viruses Association has long recommended to prevent recurrences is to take a low dose of aspirin daily. This was originally suggested to the HVA by Dr John Oates, who advised us in the early days of the charity – and wrote a book about herpes simplex (now out of print). His explanation for its use was that aspirin lowers the prostaglandins that cause inflammation and should reduce the severity of symptoms. Many members over the years have found this advice helpful.

We often suggest that taking half an aspirin a day for a couple of weeks before a holiday or honeymoon may be worth trying.

Two members have reported that after being prescribed low daily dose of aspirin for a different medical problem, all their herpes simplex recurrences have stopped.

New inflammation hypothesis

Now an Open University student has provided further evidence to support the aspirin idea. Project manager Gary Smith has been studying the phenomena of inflammation and has questioned received wisdom on the reason for it. Up to now, most doctors and scientists have believed that when an infection starts to attack the body, inflammation is part of the immune response's attempt to contain the infection. Gary's theory is quite different. "*The inflammation is not the body trying to fight the infection, it is actually the virus or bacteria deliberately causing inflammation in order to hide from the immune system,*" he said.

Next time try aspirin

This means that inflammation is unhelpful and our immune systems work better without it. The theory is attracting attention from medical researchers worldwide. Which brings us back to our longstanding advice about aspirin. This old and popular drug is renowned for its ability to reduce inflammation. So next time you have a recurrence, or think you are about to have one, be sure to take a regular dose of aspirin. It should reduce inflammation so that your immune system has an easier time clearing up the infection.

Notes:

Consult a doctor before taking any over-the-counter medication long-term.

Aspirin should not be given to children under 16 because there is a low risk it can cause Reye's syndrome.

Adults should be cautious about taking aspirin if they have stomach problems.