Aspirin Reduces overall Cancer and Mortality Rates

The regular use of aspirin, and not other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), is associated with a reduced incidence of cancer and cancer-related death, particularly among non smokers.

NSAIDs include commonly used analgesic drugs, such as ibuprofen and naproxen, that are usually available over-the-counter. The findings were reported at the 100th annual gathering of the American Association for Cancer Research in Los Angeles by Dr Aditya Bardia of Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, Rochester, Minnesota.

The take-home message is that aspirin might have anti-cancer effects, but can also have adverse effects such as gastric bleeding. One should speak to his or her doctor about the risks and benefits of aspirin use," Bardia said.

Bardia noted, "Our study is different in the sense that it is a large study that looked at the association between aspirin and non-aspirin use, and overall cancer incidence and mortality, in a comprehensive fashion, and also evaluated the results by smoking status."

Among 22,507 postmenopausal women in the Iowa Women's Health Study who were followed for up to 12 years, 3,487 developed cancer and 1,193 died from the disease. Regular aspirin use, compared with no aspirin use, was associated with a 16-per cent lower risk of cancer and a 13-per cent lower risk of cancer death, the team reported.

The inverse association between aspirin use and the risk of cancer and cancer-related death was strongest among former smokers and those who never smoked compared with current smoker. Aspirin use also appeared to protect patients against coronary heart disease and the overall mortality rate.

This study provides "provocative evidence that regular aspirin use may play a role in preventing the most common chronic diseases in western countries, namely cancer and heart disease," Bardia said in a statement. ❑

Source: Reuters Health