

Four-in-one pill prevents third of heart problems

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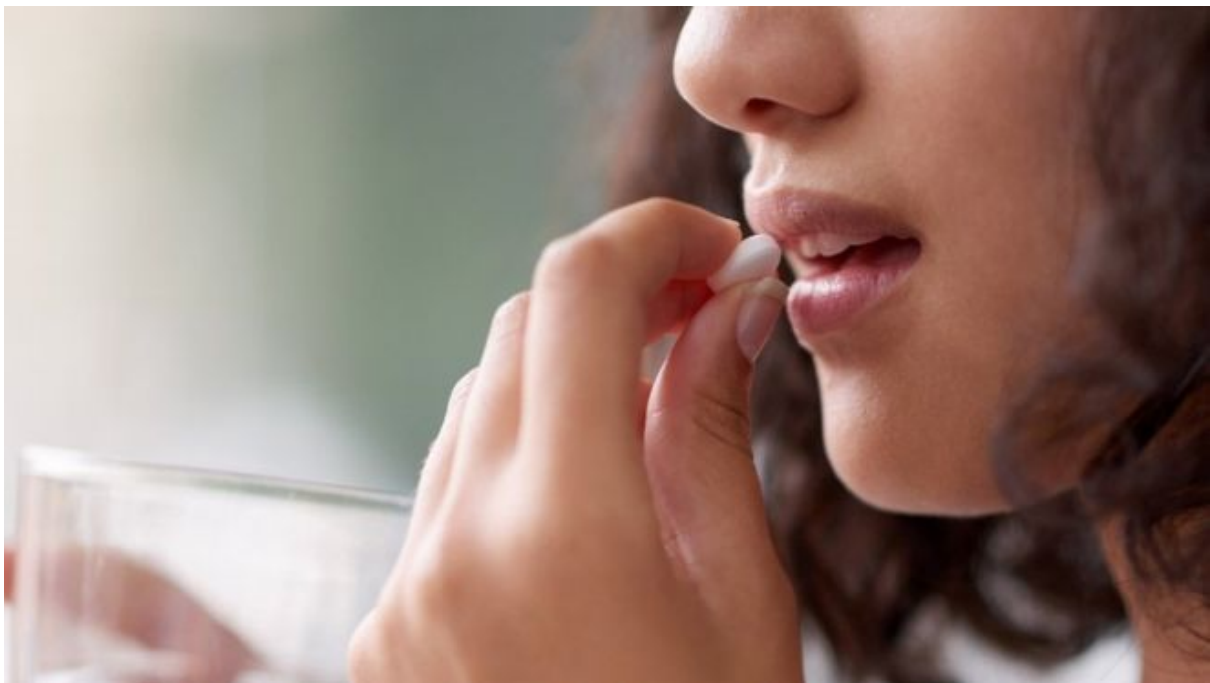


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A daily pill containing four medicines can cut the number of heart attacks and strokes by a third, a study shows.

The polypill contains blood-thinning aspirin, a cholesterol-lowering statin and two drugs to lower blood pressure.

The researchers - in Iran and the UK - said the pill had a huge impact but cost just pennies a day.

They suggest giving it to everyone over a certain age in poorer countries, where doctors have fewer options and are less able to assess individuals.

Coronary heart disease and stroke are the top two causes of death worldwide, killing more than 15 million people a year.

Smoking, obesity and doing little exercise all increase the risk of an unhealthy heart.

The study, **published in the Lancet**, was based in more than 100 villages in Iran and about 6,800 people took part.

Half the people were given the polypill and advice on how to improve their lifestyle, with the other half just getting the advice.

After five years there were:

- 202 major cardiovascular events in the 3,421 people getting the polypill
- 301 in the 3,417 not getting the pill

At this rate, giving the preventative drug combination to 35 people would prevent one of them developing a serious heart problem over the course of five years.

"We've provided evidence in a developing or middle-income country - and that's a lot of countries - that this is a strategy worth considering," Professor Tom Marshall, from the University of Birmingham, told BBC News.

The polypill led to large reductions in bad cholesterol but had only a slight effect on blood pressure, the study showed.

The drug was given to people over the age of 50 whether they had had a previous heart problem or not.



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Image caption

A third of Britons with high blood pressure were unaware they have the condition

"Given the polypill's affordability, there is considerable potential to improve cardiovascular health and to prevent the world's leading cause of death," said Dr Nizal Sarrafzadegan, of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Iran.

The idea of the polypill has been around since 2001 but this is the first major trial to prove its effectiveness.

In the UK and other wealthier countries doctors have the time to assess the needs of individual patients and a wide choice of different drugs, such as statins, to choose from.

"In the UK, the advantages would be more marginal and you would probably want a clinical trial to see any benefits over what is offered at the moment," said Prof Marshall.

The drug is also not licensed in the UK and would be tricky to get approved.

The British Heart Foundation said a third of Britons with high blood pressure were unaware they have the condition.

"This means that the biggest priority in the UK is to identify more people who do not realise they have high blood cholesterol or high blood pressure and to help people prescribed medications to take them as prescribed," the charity said.



Media caption

'I saved his life on our first date'

四合一藥丸可以防止三分之一的心臟病發生

一項研究顯示，每天服用一顆含有四種藥的藥丸，可以讓心臟病，中風的發生率降低三分之一。

這種藥丸包括降低血液濃度的阿斯匹靈，降低膽固醇的statin(他汀)，還有兩種降低血壓的藥物。

在伊朗以及英國的研究人員說這種藥物有重大的影響，但是價錢卻非常的親民。

研究人員建議提供給貧窮國家中超過某一年齡的每個人使用，因為那兒的醫師的可用資源有限，而且很不容易去接觸到個人病患。

冠狀心臟疾病，以及中風是全球疾病死亡的兩個名列前茅的重大原因，每年有超過一千五百萬人因而喪命。

抽烟，肥胖，還有少運動，都會增加心臟疾病的風險。

這項刊登於刺絡針雜誌的報告，是在伊朗超過100個村莊裏，針對約6,800人所做的研究結果。

有一半的參與者被給予這種四合一的藥物，以及改善他們生活方式/行爲的建議，另外一半的人則只給予改善建議，而不給予藥物。

五年後的結果是：

-在第一個群組裏面，3,421人中，有202項重大心血管病症發生

-而第二群組裏面，3,417人中。有301項重大心血管病症發生。

根據這樣的推算，給予這樣防範性藥物，每35個人中，就可減少1位在五年內發生重大心臟疾病的機會。

英國伯明翰大學的湯姆·馬歇爾教授跟BBC說“我們提供的證據，在中等收入，或是發展中國家裏面，世界上有不少這類的國家，這樣的預防策略是值得考慮的”。

這項研究顯示，這種四合一藥物可以大幅降低壞的膽固醇，但是在降低血壓方面的效果就不大。

試驗時期，藥物是提供給五十歲以上的人，無論他們有無心臟方面的疾病。

伊朗伊斯法罕大學醫藥科學的 Dr. Nizal Sarrafzadegan 說“基於這種藥物的親民價格，在改善心血管方面的健康問題，預防這種高死亡率的病因的發生，有很大的潛力”

這種融合多種藥物在一起的概念大約起源於2001年，但是上述的實驗是第一次大規模的實施，而且證明這種藥物有效。

在英國，及其他富裕的國家，醫師們有時間去評估不同病人的需求，也有多樣的藥物，譬如說 statin (他汀)，可以從中選擇。

馬歇爾教授說“在英國，這種藥物的好處就不是很大，同時可能必須對當時所提供的藥物成分做臨床實驗”

這種藥物並未授權給英國使用，而且被核准的可能性也有待觀察。

英國心臟基金會說有三分之一患有高血壓的英國人並不知道自己有这样的問題。

基金會說“這樣就表示目前首要的工作是找出那些不理解自己患有高膽固醇，高血壓症狀的人，然後協助他們找到適合自己的藥物，讓他們按照處方規定來服用”