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Second stroke linked to stopping aspirin therapy

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HEART HEALTHY NEWS

Feb 04 (HeartCenterOnline) - Stroke patients who discontinued low-dose aspirin therapy tripled their risk of having another stroke, compared to patients who continued their aspirin therapy, according to a new study.

The findings were presented February 2 at the American Stroke Association's International Stroke Conference 2005. The study was the first of its kind to look at the risk of discontinuing [aspirin](#) therapy and may have profound implications for [stroke](#) patients.

In the study, 309 stroke patients were matched with 309 additional patients, all of whom were on long-term aspirin therapy. The average age of the patient was 71 years old, and 62 percent were male. Aspirin is one of the most commonly prescribed medications after a stroke or heart attack.

Researchers closely tracked the two groups for compliance with aspirin therapy and the occurrence of a second stroke. They found that almost 80 percent of recurrent strokes occurred within eight days after aspirin therapy was stopped. The rest occurred within a month.

Patients stopped aspirin therapy for a variety of reasons, including on their physician's advice because of an upcoming surgery. Aspirin is linked to an elevated risk of bleeding during surgery. Other reasons for discontinuation included minor bleeding and noncompliance.

According to Dr. Patrik Michel, co-author of the study and director of the acute stroke unit at Lausanne University in Lausanne, Switzerland,

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patients should always be made aware of the risk of discontinuing their aspirin therapy.

"Although the absolute risk of suffering a substantial stroke during a short period of aspirin discontinuation is probably not very high, this difference is meaningful," he said.

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