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# An aspirin a day for the elderly

By Josh Bartlett

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Bega's Dr Duncan Mackinnon is part of a study which will determine if a daily dose of aspirin can help elderly residents.

BEGA GP Duncan Mackinnon has joined an extensive research study into the use of aspirin.

The largest primary prevention study of its kind in Australia will determine if a daily dose of aspirin will benefit elderly residents.

If successful, the study could lead to a healthier and longer life for seniors.

Dr Mackinnon, from the Bega Valley Medical Practice, is encouraging patients to take part in Aspirin in Reducing Events in the Elderly.

ASPREE is being led by researchers in Australia and the US, aiming to enrol 19,000 people in the study.

The trial will reveal if low-dose aspirin can prevent the onset of cardiovascular disease, dementia and certain cancers.

Dr Mackinnon, who has 29 years of GP experience, said the common-held view was that aspirin would "thin your blood".

However, he said there was plenty of information available about the benefits of aspirin.

“There is evidence that aspirin has a significant beneficial effect on bowel cancer and bladder cancer,” Dr Mackinnon said.

“Maybe it will also help with heart attacks and strokes, or reduce the chance of people having one.”

Dr Mackinnon said the study will finally give GPs some important answers.

However, he urged residents they will need to be patient.

“It’s going to take five years to get the results out,” he said.

“It will answer if aspirin is good to take, or not good to take – whether it’s protective or not.”

Dr Mackinnon is among 2400 registered GPs across Australia who have chosen to support ASPREE.

Dr Mackinnon said with aspirin being so cheap to purchase, the trial will not hugely benefit pharmaceutical companies.

“It’s good to be able to get involved in something that will answer the question, ‘should we be using aspirin for older Australians’,” he said.

Residents in the Bega Valley who are over 70 years and in good health are invited to take part in ASPREE.

The study in Australia is being led by researchers at Monash University, Melbourne.

Eligible study participants are randomly assigned to take a daily tablet - half will be taking 100mg of aspirin and half a placebo.

Participants also undergo free annual study health checks for an average of five years.

To be involved in the study, call ASPREE on 1800 728 745 (toll free from a landline) or visit [www.aspree.org](http://www.aspree.org).