

**HEALTH NEWS**

**Doctors urge caution in children's cholesterol level**

By David S. Martin  
 Carl Pyle, a spokesman for the American Heart Association, said pediatricians usually don't ask about heart problems in a child's family.

DANVILLE, Pa. (AP) — High cholesterol often goes undetected in children, because doctors fail to check the youngster's family history for early heart attacks, according to heart specialists.

"We're really beginning to appreciate how this is an inheritable thing that gets passed on through the family," said Dr. John G. Spangler, director of the department of pediatric cardiology at Geisinger Medical Center.

Previously, doctors believed that and lifestyle were the most important contributors to high cholesterol, he said in a recent interview.

Doctors should test cholesterol levels in children with a close relative who suffered a heart attack before the age of 50, Spangler said. Some pediatric cardiologists have recommended cholesterol tests for all 10-year-old children.

**Asprin study not conclusive**

The results of a new study linking aspirin with reduced risk of heart attack should not be viewed as a recommendation that everyone take aspirin on a regular basis, according to a cardiologist at New York University Medical Center.

"It is an open question whether the conclusions drawn from this study can be applied to the general population," said Dr. Martin Kahn, professor of clinical medicine.

An article in an upcoming issue of the center's Health Letter reports that the study, part of a larger research project called the Physician's Health Study, found that a group of 11,004 doctors who took 325 milligrams of aspirin every other day had fewer heart attacks than a similar group of 11,037 who took no aspirin, an inert substance.

The risk of hemorrhagic stroke was found to be slightly greater among aspirin takers than in the placebo group.

Conditions that are other risk factors for heart disease or reasons to avoid taking aspirin, he explained.

"It simply cannot be concluded from the study's findings that anyone else could benefit from regular use of low-dose aspirin," Kahn concluded.

Aspirin — chemically, acetylsalicylic acid — has been used for more than a century to relieve pain and reduce fever and inflammation. It is thought to reduce the risk of heart attack by inhibiting the formation of blood clots.

There are, however, a number of risk factors aspirin cannot affect, including age, family history of heart attack, smoking, high levels of serum cholesterol and untreated hypertension.

Although aspirin is probably the most commonly used drug and is generally regarded as safe for

In most cases, high cholesterol can be controlled with diet, exercise and medication, Spangler said.

Cholesterol levels often are associated with a person's weight because a source of cholesterol is fatty foods, but children who have inherited high cholesterol can be thin and appear healthy, he said.

In recent months, heart specialists and organizations have been working to spread the word about high cholesterol in children.

Kenneth Chiles in Pennsylvania recently finished distributing 80,000 brochures on high-cholesterol problems in children to shopping malls, schools, and other public places in Pennsylvania.

Curtner said he has traveled to different hospitals to tell doctors about testing child cholesterol.

"Pediatricians have until recently never looked for elevated cholesterol in children," he said.

Curtner was a member of an ad hoc committee that advised the

The American Heart Association last week recommended tests for 5-year-old children with a family history of heart disease and additional tests for the youngsters every two or three years.

"It's with a new lens and so hot that the big organizations just now are getting involved in this and making some recommendations," Spangler said.

They need to order to high blood pressure as a silent killer. Now its blood pressure and cholesterol," he said.

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