

# Aspirin-

ancient  
remedy

for

modern

maladies

# med-

Hippocrates, the father of medicine, would be proud. Aspirin, his centuries-old concoction, now is used an estimated 80 billion times a year in the United States.



JoAnn Frederick

"It's an old product that has many uses than just to relieve pain," said David O'Dell, M.D., associate professor of internal medicine at UNMC.

Old is correct. Historians say aspirin dates to at least the fifth century, B.C., when Hippocrates used a powder obtained from tree bark to ease aches and pains, and reduce fever.

Aspirin — no matter the brand — reduces pain. That's a fact. It also has other

uses — and the potential for many more. Aspirin, according to Dr. O'Dell:

- Can be used to prevent migraine headaches.

- Can decrease the risk of stroke.

- Can reduce the chance of heart attack, especially those who already have suffered one and are at risk of another.

"Now there's even a question that aspirin may prevent colon cancer," Dr. O'Dell said, "although I would have to say the jury is still out."

Aspirin's armor isn't without chinks. It has side effects. "The flipside is it causes bleeding," Dr. O'Dell said. Also severe stomach pain, dizziness or drowsiness, skin rash and hives, and even ringing in the ears. It's also clearly linked with Reyes Syndrome, an often-fatal condition in children characterized by fever, vomiting and swelling of the liver and brain.

Side effects aside, aspirin is invaluable, Dr. O'Dell said, and always will be. "It's an old reliable." *d*