

Antiplatelet Drugs: Do You Need One to Help Prevent a Heart Attack or Stroke?

What are antiplatelets?

Antiplatelets are drugs used to help prevent strokes and heart attacks. They are also used to treat blocked arteries in the legs. Antiplatelets, which include aspirin, are one of the most commonly used drugs in the world.

Antiplatelets work to keep blood clots from forming. Blood clots are directly linked to heart attacks and strokes. The risk of clotting increases if you have narrowing, or “hardening,” of the arteries. Taking an antiplatelet drug can help decrease this danger.

Risks for heart disease and stroke

- Blood clots in your legs
- Family history of heart disease
- Heart attack or stroke in the past
- High blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes
- Smoking or being overweight

Do I need an antiplatelet drug?

If you have any of the conditions listed in the box on the left, you are at risk for heart disease and stroke. You may already be taking drugs to lower your risk. Your doctor may also advise you to take an antiplatelet to help lower your risk even more.

Who should not take an antiplatelet drug?

If you have a history of ulcers or stomach bleeding, your doctor may advise you not to take an antiplatelet.

Our advice:

If you and your doctor decide you should take an antiplatelet, you'll want the best one at the best price for your condition. We compared how well they work to prevent blood clots, the side effects of each drug, and the cost. We chose the following as *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs*. The drug which is right for you will depend on your condition.

 **Aspirin plus clopidogrel (Plavix and generic)**—If you have been diagnosed with acute coronary syndrome (e.g. unstable angina), you have a stent, or you have had a heart attack.

 **Clopidogrel (Plavix and generic)**—If you can't take aspirin and you have been diagnosed with acute coronary syndrome, or you have a stent.

 **Aspirin, aspirin plus extended-release dipyridamole (Aggrenox), or clopidogrel (Plavix and generic)**—If you have had a stroke or mini-stroke (TIA).

 **Aspirin**—If you have peripheral vascular disease.

The chart on the next page can help you compare costs and decide which antiplatelet may be the best for you.



Aspirin is an antiplatelet drug. It is used regularly to help prevent blood clots.

Antiplatelet Drugs

Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs are in blue. We recommend these drugs because they work as well and are as safe as the other drugs, and they cost less.

Our analysis is based on a scientific review by the Oregon Health and Science University-based Drug Effectiveness Review Project. This is a summary of a longer, more detailed report you can find at www.CRBESTBUYDRUGS.org.

Best Buy	Generic Name & Strength	Brand Name	Pills per Day	Cost per Month ¹	Recommended Use
 Aspirin tablet 81 mg–325 mg	Bayer, Bufferin, Others & Generic	One	\$1		If you have acute coronary syndrome, peripheral vascular disease, a stent, or have had a stroke or mini-stroke (TIA)
 Aspirin/dipyridamole sustained-release capsule 25 mg/200 mg	Aggrenox	Two	\$247		If you've had a stroke or mini-stroke (TIA)
 Clopidogrel tablet 75 mg	Plavix	One	\$254²		If you have acute coronary syndrome or a stent, or if you've had a stroke or mini-stroke (TIA)
 Clopidogrel tablet 75 mg	Clopidogrel (generic Plavix)	One	\$264²		If you have acute coronary syndrome or a stent, or if you've had a stroke or mini-stroke (TIA)
Prasugrel tablet 10 mg	Effient	One	\$222		
Prasugrel tablet 5 mg	Effient	One	\$231		
Ticlopidine tablet 250 mg	Generic	Two	\$64		

¹ Prices are based on nationwide retail average prices for April 2011. *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* obtained prices from data provided by Wolters Kluwer Pharma Solutions, which is not involved in our analysis or recommendations.

² Prices for Clopidogrel (Plavix and generic) are based on nationwide retail average prices for October 2012. *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* obtained prices from data provided by Wolters Kluwer Pharma Solutions, which is not involved in our analysis or recommendations.