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5 Surprising Uses for Aspirin

The common over-the-counter pain reliever can do wonders you probably don't know about.

By [Aleksandra Mencil](#)

The benefits of aspirin far exceed temporary relief from fever, aches, and pains. Most people know that it can protect you from a heart attack or [stroke](#), if taken properly. [Research suggests that it can reduce the risk of some cancers](#) and Alzheimer's disease. But aspirin has many other potential health, beauty, and personal benefits. Discover some of the amazing things that bottle in your medicine cabinet can do for you.

1. Treats skin conditions. Used as far back as the fifth century B.C. by Hippocrates to ease aches and pains, salicylic acid, a derivative of acetylsalicylic acid (aspirin), is a powder extracted from the bark of a willow tree. It "helps remove excess oil and exfoliate dead cells on the skin's surface," says Joshua Zeichner, MD, director of cosmetic and clinical research in dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, adding that it's "extremely useful in treating acne."

By dissolving dead skin and helping to shed the skin's top layer, salicylic acid reduces the possibility of clogged pores – the common culprit behind breakouts. It also clears up redness and decreases swelling, which can alleviate [symptoms of rosacea](#). People with [psoriasis](#) may also benefit from the salicylic acid in aspirin. "It can make psoriasis lesions thinner and can help reduce itch," says Dr. Zeichner.

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To make your own aspirin-based skin mask, crush up five uncoated aspirin pills and drop them into a quarter-cup of warm, distilled water. Stir well until the concoction develops a paste-like consistency. If you want, you can add a teaspoon of honey to the mix to reap the benefits of this natural antibacterial moisturizer. Once the mixture is about the same temperature as your skin, apply to any parts of the body affected by acne or other kinds of inflammation, and leave on for about 10 minutes. Wash off with warm water.

2. Gets rid of dandruff. Because of its moisturizing qualities, the same salicylic acid contained in face washes is also an ingredient in many dandruff shampoos. "Applying aspirin mixed with shampoo to your scalp may help reduce scalp

inflammation that causes [dandruff](#) and help exfoliate flakes on the skin," says Zeichner.

To make the concoction, crush two or three uncoated aspirins and mix them into the normal amount of shampoo used each time you wash your hair. Focus on your scalp as you massage the mixture into hair and let it sit for three to five minutes before rinsing.

3. Soothes stings and bites. Zeichner says aspirin, with its anti-inflammatory properties, may help reduce the redness, swelling, and pain from bug bites. Make an [aspirin paste](#) similar to the one used for problem skin or just dampen an uncoated aspirin and apply it to the affected area for a few minutes.

4. Removes stains. The salicylic acid in aspirin helps to neutralize stains by attacking the compounds found in [sweat](#) and breaking them down. Mix three crushed aspirins and half a cup of warm water in a bowl. Submerge the stained portion of the clothing into the bowl for a few hours. Afterwards, wash the shirt as usual. You can use any of the leftover mixture to remove nicotine or grass stains from hands by applying the solution and letting it sit for 15 minutes before washing hands thoroughly.

5. Makes your garden grow. Aspirin works just as well outside as it does on your skin by activating the plants' natural defenses and preventing the formation of fungus. It also increases growth rate. Dissolve an uncoated aspirin in one gallon of water and spray onto any indoor and outdoor plants. It can also help prolong the life of fresh cut flowers. According to Judy Jernstedt, professor of plant sciences at UC Davis, the "salicylic acid reduces ethylene production, and with less ethylene present, floral senescence is delayed and the flowers last longer. The anti-fungal properties of salicylic acid dissolved in the vase water may also slow growth of mold, which if it enters the cut stem, can damage or clog the vascular tissue." So be sure to add a ground aspirin to the water for your floral arrangement.

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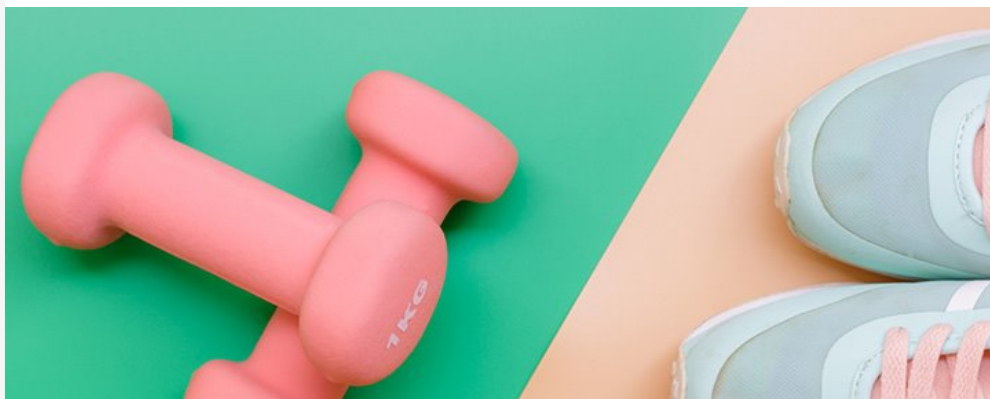
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