

PREVENTING DRUG-INDUCED HEARING LOSS

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Promising data show that aspirin may prevent many cases of hearing loss linked to inexpensive antibiotics commonly used in the developing world to fight acute infections and tuberculosis among other conditions. Researchers studied 195 patients in China who received gentamicin (a type of aminoglycoside) intravenously twice daily, typically for five to seven days. Of those, 89 patients were given aspirin along with the antibiotic, and 106 were given placebos paired with the antibiotic. The results were dramatic. The incidence of hearing loss in the placebo group was 13 percent compared to three percent in the aspirin group, or 75 percent lower.

Further studies may lead to the development of new and safer antibiotics, or another drug that can be paired with gentamicin that has fewer side effects than aspirin.