Over 100 Years of Aspirin

Aspirin History - Who invented aspirin?

The effects of aspirin-like substances have been known since the ancient Romans recorded the use of the willow bark as a fever fighter. The leaves and bark of the willow tree contain a substance called salicin, a naturally occurring compound similar to acetylsalicylic acid, the chemical name for aspirin.

Many people are curious about who invented aspirin. While no one person invented aspirin, the origin of aspirin as we know it came about through research. Aspirin discovery was actually the result of the work of several aspirin inventors. In 1897, a German chemist with Friedrich Bayer and Company was searching for a treatment for his father's arthritic pain and began to research acetylsalicylic acid, which worked well. His discovery resulted in the development of a product introduced as Aspirin. By 1899, The Bayer Company was providing aspirin to physicians to give to their patients.

Here is a timeline that shows the origins of aspirin, the history of its development, and some of the people who invented improvements and contributed to making aspirin the pain reliever and preventive measure that it is today:

400 BC	Greek physician Hippocrates prescribes the bark and leaves of the willow tree (rich in a substance called salicin) to relieve pain and fever.
1832	A German chemist experiments with salicin and creates salicylic acid (SA).
1897	Chemist, Felix Hoffmann, at Bayer® in Germany, chemically synthesizes a stable form of ASA powder that relieves his father's rheumatism. The compound later becomes the active ingredient in aspirin named - "a" from acetyl, "spir" from the spirea plant (which yields salicin) and "in," a common suffix for medications.
1899	Bayer distributes aspirin powder to physicians to give to their patients. Aspirin is soon the number one drug worldwide.
1900	Bayer introduces the first aspirin in water-soluble tablets - the first medication to be sold in this form. This new product cut costs in half.
1915	Aspirin becomes available without a prescription. Manufactured in tablet form.
1920s	Used to treat symptoms of pain related to rheumatism, lumbago & neuralgia.
1948	Dr. Lawrence Craven, a California general practitioner, notices that the 400 men he prescribed aspirin to hadn't suffered any heart attacks. He regularly recommends to all patients and colleagues that "an aspirin a day" could dramatically reduce the risk of heart attack.
1952	Children's Chewable Aspirin is introduced.
1969	Bayer Aspirin tablets were included in the self-medication kits taken to the moon by the Apollo astronauts. Aspirin proved very effective in combating the headaches and muscle pains that frequently resulted from long periods of immobility.
Early 1970s	Medical world began to understand how aspirin works when scientists discovered that it inhibits the production of chemicals, called prostaglandins, that are involved in inflammations.
1984	Toleraid® microcoating (clear coat) is added to Genuine Bayer Aspirin to make the tablets easier to swallow.
1988	The use of aspirin expands beyond pain relief to that of a potential lifesaver. The FDA approves aspirin for reducing the risk of recurrent MI (myocardial infarction) or heart attack and preventing first MI in patients with unstable angina. The FDA also approved the use of aspirin for the prevention of recurrent transient-ischemic attacks or "mini-strokes" in men and made aspirin standard therapy for previous strokes in men. In addition to its role in heart attack and stroke prevention, research continues to explore aspirin's possible role in prevention of colon, esophageal cancer and other diseases.