Hnf042213

Health newsfeed for Monday, April 22, 2013

HEADLINE: PREVENTING BREAST CANCER

ANCHOR LEAD: SHOULD YOU TAKE MEDICINES TO PREVENT BREAST CANCER? ELIZABETH TRACEY REPORTS

Should you be taking some type of medication to reduce your risk of developing breast cancer? Recommendations published in Annals of Internal Medicine say that the vast majority of women can and should give these medicines a miss. Ben Park, a breast cancer expert at Johns Hopkins, explains why.

PARK: Medicines like tamoxifen and reloxafine can prevent new diagnosis of breast cancer as primary prevention, that is, women who have never had breast cancer but who, for whatever reason, have a higher risk for developing breast cancer. The recommendations really are that for average risk women that this would not be recommended. Just like every other intervention, medicines included, there are side effects and potential down sides for taking these drugs. There's an increased risk of clot formation, for tamoxifen there's an increased risk of endometrial cancer. :28

Park acknowledges that some women are so fearful of breast cancer they may insist on one of these drugs, but he doesn't recommend it for most of us. At Johns Hopkins, I'm Elizabeth Tracey.