

Women, You May Want to Reconsider That Blood-Pressure Medicine

Many older women take drugs called calcium-channel blockers to lower their blood pressure. But new research has found that these widely used medications can double a woman's risk of developing breast cancer.

Calcium-channel blockers relax blood vessels so that blood flows more easily, lowering blood pressure. They are among the most widely prescribed drugs in the United States.

Researchers at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle collected data on 1,907 women between the ages of 55 and 74, who had breast cancer. They compared those subjects with information on more than 880 women without cancer.

The scientists found that women who had used calcium-channel blockers for 10 years or more were at higher risk for breast cancer than those who took other types of blood-pressure medication.

I don't believe calcium-channel blockers are the best choice for reducing blood pressure anyway. I use angiotensin II antagonists or ACE inhibitors (such as lisinopril) as my first line in treating high blood pressure. I prescribe other medications, such as diuretics, if necessary.

Of course, the best way to prevent high blood pressure is to do so naturally. Losing weight is the most effective way. Generally, a loss of 10 pounds results in the need for one less blood-pressure medication.

I also recommend eliminating salt, following a plant-based diet, and walking one hour daily.

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