

Dr Jon LaPook: It's a huge⁽¹⁾ disappointment⁽²⁾ in the field of cancer prevention. The largest trial of its kind known as SELECT hoped vitamin E and selenium would prevent prostate cancer. CBSnews has learned patients are being told to stop taking the pills because they don't seem to work.

Dr Eric Klein: Taking selenium or vitamin E at the doses that we use in the SELECT trials for an average of five years did not prevent prostate cancer.

LaPook: The study of over 35,000 men in their fifties and older began back in 2001. Doctors at more than 400 sites gave combinations of vitamin E, the mineral selenium and placebo. The supplements failed⁽³⁾ to prevent prostate cancer and there were two worrisome⁽⁴⁾ trends⁽⁵⁾: patients taking vitamin E alone had a slightly higher rate of prostate cancer. Men who took selenium alone were more likely to develop diabetes. The researchers believe the increases may just be due to chance.

Dr Klein: The safety issues are of more minor concern and bear for the follow-up.

LaPook: Vitamin E and selenium are antioxidants that exist in relatively small amounts in food. Previous studies suggested that higher doses might help prevent prostate cancer. That's why neurologists like Dr Aaron Katz had high hopes for the trial.

Dr Katz: I'm disappointed with the study, I'm very concerned about the results of the trial. I would have hoped that this would have been the way to prevent cancer in this country.

LaPook: Over the next week, the 35,000 men in the study will be notified the results and told to stop the supplements. Dr Katz talked to one of the participants today.

Dr Katz: He's concerned, you've got to be concerned, you're hearing the results of a national trial you participated in and now finding that perhaps I may have increased my risk of developing the disease.

LaPook: This is major disappointment but it's also progress because it's important to know what doesn't work to prevent cancer. Katie...

Katie Couric: And Jon, what about an old man who may be taking multivitamin or a supplement that contains vitamin E and/or selenium? Should they be concerned?

LaPook: Well, the levels of vitamin E and selenium in the typical multivit are a lot less than those that were used in this study, ok! But here is the thing, if you're taking a supplement, talk to your doctor because supplements are not regulated by the FDA. They can have side effects and here is the punch line⁽⁶⁾ of the whole deal today: studies like this are very necessary because they help us to figure out⁽⁷⁾ what works and what doesn't work.

Couric: Doctor Jon LaPook, thanks so much.

CBSnews.

Lexical helpline:

1. **huge (adj):** enormous
2. **disappointment (n):** feeling of sadness and frustration
3. **fail (v):** not succeed
4. **worrisome (adj):** causing anxiety and distress
5. **trend (n):** tendency
6. **punch line:** most important element
7. **figure out (v):** find an explanation, decide