

## U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Draft Recommendation Statement on Screening Children for Lipid Disorders

*Task Force determines that more research is needed to recommend for or against screening children and adolescents for high cholesterol*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – January 24, 2023 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today posted a draft recommendation statement on screening for lipid disorders (high cholesterol) in children and adolescents. Based on its review, the Task Force determined that the current evidence is insufficient to assess the balance of benefits and harms of screening for lipid disorders in children and adolescents 20 years or younger. **This is an I statement.** This I statement is for children and adolescents who do not have signs, symptoms, or a known diagnosis of a cholesterol disorder.

### Grade in this recommendation:

I: The balance of benefits and harms cannot be determined.

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The Task Force looked at the evidence on screening for two types of cholesterol disorders in children and adolescents: 1) high cholesterol from a genetic mutation (familial hypercholesterolemia) and 2) high cholesterol caused primarily by environmental factors such as a high-fat diet, sedentary lifestyle, and obesity (multifactorial dyslipidemia). A blood test measuring different components of cholesterol has been studied to screen for both types of cholesterol disorders. If cholesterol levels are found to be high, further testing is commonly needed to confirm the diagnosis.

“Our recommendation highlights the need for more research on whether or not screening children for high cholesterol improves their heart health into adulthood,” says Task Force member Li Li, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H. “In the absence of this data, healthcare professionals should use their judgment on whether to measure the cholesterol levels of their young patients, and caregivers should share any concerns related to cholesterol or heart health.”

It is important to note that this is not a recommendation for or against screening youth for cholesterol disorders. There is limited evidence on the benefits and harms of screening children and teens without symptoms or a known cholesterol disorder. In addition, the potential long-term harms of treating children and adolescents to lower cholesterol are not yet understood. Therefore, the Task Force is calling for more research on this topic.

“Despite this lack of evidence on cholesterol screening, the Task Force does recommend other evidence-based ways to promote good heart health in young patients, including screening and counseling for obesity,” says Task Force member Katrina Donahue, M.D., M.P.H. “Good nutrition and physical activity habits begin in childhood and can improve cardiovascular health throughout life.”

The Task Force’s draft recommendation statement and draft evidence review have been posted for public comment on the Task Force website at <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org>. Comments can be submitted from January 24, 2023, through February 21, 2023, at <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/tfcomment.htm>.

The Task Force is an independent, volunteer panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine that works to improve the health of people nationwide by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications.

Dr. Li is a family physician and the Walter M. Seward professor and the chair of family medicine at the University of Virginia (UVA) School of Medicine. He is also the director of population health at UVA Health and leader of the Cancer Prevention and Population Health program at the UVA Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Dr. Donahue is a professor and vice chair of research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Department of Family Medicine. She is a family physician and senior research fellow at the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research and the co-director of the North Carolina Network Consortium, a meta-network of six practice-based research networks and four academic institutions in North Carolina.

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