

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Final Recommendation Statement on Screening for Obstructive Sleep Apnea in Adults

More research is needed to recommend for or against screening adults without recognized symptoms

WASHINGTON, D.C. – November 15, 2022 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation statement on screening for obstructive sleep apnea in adults. The Task Force determined there is not enough evidence to make a recommendation for or against screening for sleep apnea. **This is an I statement.**

Grade in this recommendation:

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

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This recommendation applies to adults, ages 18 and older, who do not have signs or symptoms of sleep apnea. It also applies to adults who are not aware of their symptoms or who do not report symptoms to their healthcare professional.

Obstructive sleep apnea is a health condition in which part or all of a person's airway gets blocked during sleep, causing them to repeatedly stop and start breathing while sleeping. Untreated sleep apnea is associated with heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, and people with severe cases may be more likely to die. Symptoms of sleep apnea include loud snoring, excessive daytime sleepiness, and waking up suddenly with feelings of choking or gasping.

"The Task Force looked at the evidence on screening for sleep apnea because it can negatively affect people's health, and it is tied to other serious health issues like heart disease and stroke," says Task Force member Gbenga Ogedegbe, M.D., M.P.H. "Unfortunately, there is not enough evidence to determine if screening all adults for sleep apnea improves health and quality of life."

People at increased risk for sleep apnea include men, postmenopausal people, older adults ages 40–70, people with a higher BMI, and people with a physical irregularity that could affect their upper airway and breathing. Black, Native American, and Hispanic/Latino people have higher rates of sleep apnea compared to White people, which is thought to be related to higher rates of obesity and other health issues in these groups.

"Most patients do not discuss sleep habits or sleep-related symptoms with their primary care clinicians," says Task Force member Martha Kubik, Ph.D., R.N. "Since the evidence on screening all adults for sleep apnea is limited, healthcare professionals should use their judgment when deciding who to screen, and patients who have concerns about their sleeping should talk to their healthcare professional about their symptoms."

The Task Force's final recommendation statement and corresponding evidence summary have been published online in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, as well as on the Task Force website at: <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org>. A draft version of the recommendation statement and evidence review were available for public comment from March 29, 2022, to April 25, 2022.

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. Ogedegbe is the inaugural and founding director of the Institute for Excellence in Health Equity at NYU Langone Health. He is the Dr. Adolph and Margaret Berger Professor of Medicine and Population Health at NYU Grossman School of Medicine. Dr. Ogedegbe is a member of the National Academy of Medicine.

Dr. Kubik is a professor with the School of Nursing, College of Health and Human Services at George Mason University. She is a nurse scientist, active researcher, and past standing member on the National Institutes of Health's Community-Level Health Promotion Study Section. Dr. Kubik is an advanced practice nurse and fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.

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