

Screening for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) has issued a **final recommendation statement** on *Screening for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)*. It found that screening for COPD in people without symptoms does not result in improved health outcomes.

This final recommendation statement applies to adults who have no symptoms of COPD. This final recommendation does not apply to adults who are at risk for COPD and are seeking help for symptoms such as coughing or trouble breathing. It also does not apply to people with a family history of alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency, a genetic disorder that may cause lung disease.

What is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)?

COPD refers to a group of diseases that cause lung and breathing-related problems. It includes emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and, in some cases, asthma.

Facts about Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

COPD is a serious, chronic condition that affects a person's ability to breathe. It is the third leading cause of death in the United States. The most common symptoms of COPD are difficulty breathing, persistent cough, coughing up excess mucus, and wheezing. COPD is a progressive disease, which means that it gets worse over time.

The risk of COPD increases in people who breathe in pollutants, including cigarette smoke. In fact, the biggest risk factor for developing COPD is smoking. More than 70 percent of COPD cases occur among current or former cigarette smokers. The best way to prevent COPD is to not start smoking and to quit if you do smoke. Avoiding breathing in cigarette smoke and avoiding other pollutants, such as toxic fumes, wood smoke, or vehicle exhaust can also help reduce the risk of COPD.

Screening for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

Screening for COPD is done either with a questionnaire about symptoms (such as coughing or trouble breathing) or with a breathing test to see how well a person's lungs are working. If results from the screening test show increased risk, an additional test is done to confirm a diagnosis of COPD.

Potential Benefits and Harms of Screening for COPD

The Task Force looked at research about the use of questionnaires or lung function tests to screen for COPD in primary care. The goal of screening adults who do not have symptoms of COPD is to improve health outcomes or to encourage smokers to quit.

The Task Force found that screening for COPD in these patients did not lead to improved health outcomes. In addition, performing COPD screening in people without symptoms could mean that doctors have less time to work with their patients on other recommended preventive services.

The Final Recommendation on Screening for COPD in Adults: What Does it Mean?

Here is the Task Force's final recommendation on screening for COPD. Recommendation statements have letter grades. The grades are based on the quality and strength of the evidence about the potential benefits and harms of screening for this purpose. They also are based on the size of the potential benefits and harms. Task Force recommendation grades are explained in the box at the end of this fact sheet.

When the Task Force recommends against screening (Grade D), it is because it has more potential harms than potential benefits. The Notes explain key ideas.

Visit the Task Force Web site to read the full [final recommendation statement](#). The statement explains the evidence the Task Force reviewed and how it decided on the grade. An [evidence document](#) provides more detail about the studies the Task Force reviewed.

The USPSTF recommends against screening for *chronic obstructive pulmonary disease* (COPD) in *asymptomatic* adults.

D recommendation

Notes

chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

A severe, chronic lung disease that results in difficulty breathing and can often lead to disability.

asymptomatic

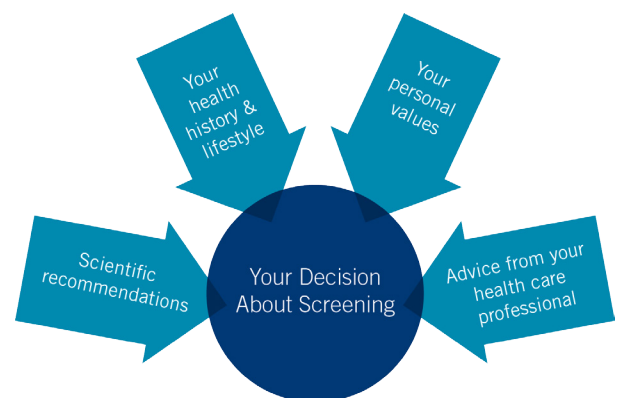
Having no symptoms of COPD.

Should You be Screened for COPD?

Getting the best health care means making smart decisions about the screening tests, counseling services, and preventive medicines you and your family should get and when to get them. Many people don't get the tests or counseling they need. Others get tests or counseling they don't need or that may be harmful to them. Task Force recommendations can help you learn about screening tests, counseling services, and preventive medicines. These services can keep you and your family healthy and prevent disease.

The Task Force does not recommend that people without symptoms be screened for COPD. However, if you are concerned that you may be at risk of COPD or have symptoms like trouble breathing or frequent coughing, talk with your doctor or nurse. Make sure your questions and concerns are answered. Consider your health and lifestyle. Think about your personal beliefs and preferences for health care. And consider scientific recommendations, like this one from the Task Force.

And most importantly, if you smoke, quit – it's one of the best things you can do for your health. Your doctor or nurse can tell you about programs and medications that can help you quit.







What is the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force?

The Task Force is an independent, volunteer group of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine. The Task Force works to improve the health of all Americans by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medicines. The recommendations apply to people with no signs or symptoms of the disease.

To develop a recommendation statement, Task Force members consider the best available science and research on a topic. For each topic, the Task Force posts draft documents for public comment, including a draft recommendation statement. All comments are reviewed and considered in developing the **final recommendation statement**. To learn more, visit the [Task Force Web site](#).

USPSTF Recommendation Grades	
Grade	Definition
A	Recommended.
B	Recommended.
C	Recommendation depends on the patient's situation.
D	Not recommended.
I statement	There is not enough evidence to make a recommendation.

Click Here to Learn More About Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

-  **Quit Smoking**
(healthfinder.gov)
-  **COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)**
(healthfinder.gov)
-  **COPD** (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
-  **COPD** (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health)