

Understanding Task Force Draft Recommendations

This fact sheet explains the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force's (Task Force) draft recommendation statement on screening for skin cancer. It also tells you how you can send comments about the draft recommendation to the Task Force. Comments may be submitted from October 25, 2022, to November 21, 2022. The Task Force welcomes your comments.

Screening for Skin Cancer

The Task Force issued a **draft recommendation statement** on *Screening for Skin Cancer*.

The Task Force determined that there is not enough evidence to recommend for or against screening for skin cancer in adolescents and adults without symptoms.

For this recommendation, screening is defined as a visual skin exam by a primary care professional. The recommendation does not apply to people with a family history of skin cancer or those with signs or symptoms, such as irregular moles.

Facts About Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States. However, most skin cancers do not cause serious complications or death. There are two main types of skin cancer: melanoma and keratinocyte carcinoma, which consists of basal and squamous cell carcinomas. Melanoma, while less common, is the deadliest type.

People at increased risk for developing skin cancer include people who have had many sunburns, males, and older people. Use of indoor tanning beds is also an important risk factor, particularly for adolescents and young adults. For melanoma specifically, people at increased risk include those with fair skin, light-colored eyes, red or blond hair, and people who have a large number of moles, especially if they look irregular, or a family or personal history of skin cancer.

Screening for Skin Cancer

Skin cancer screening consists of primary care professionals looking at a person's skin from head to toe for moles or spots that look abnormal in color, shape, size, and texture from the rest of the skin. Primary care professionals can visually inspect the person's skin with their eyes or use a magnifying device called a dermatoscope.

Potential Benefits and Harms of Screening for Skin Cancer

The goal of screening would be to identify skin cancer early so it can be treated before it causes serious complications or death. However, there is very limited evidence on the benefits of screening adolescents and adults without symptoms in primary care, so the Task Force is calling for more research on this important topic.

There is also not enough evidence to determine if there are harms associated with screening adolescents and adults who do not have signs or symptoms. Potential harms of screening include worry or stress from the screening process and overdiagnosis. Potential harms of treatment could include cosmetic harms, such as scarring from surgery, and overtreatment.

It is important that anyone who has noticed changes to their skin or has concerns about skin cancer talk to their healthcare professional so they can get the care they need.



What is skin cancer?

Skin cancer is an abnormal growth of skin cells.

The Draft Recommendation on Screening for Skin Cancer: What Does It Mean?

Here is the Task Force's draft recommendation on screening for skin cancer. It is based on the quality and strength of the evidence about the potential benefits and harms of screening for this purpose. It is also 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 issues an I Statement, it means that there is not enough evidence to recommend for or against the preventive service.

Before you send comments to the Task Force, you may want to read the **draft recommendation statement**. The recommendation statement explains the evidence the Task Force reviewed and how it decided on the grade. An **evidence document** provides more detail about the scientific studies the Task Force reviewed.

1 The USPSTF concludes that the **current evidence is insufficient** to assess the balance of benefits and harms of **visual skin examination** by a clinician to screen for **skin cancer** in adolescents and adults. **I Statement**

Notes

1 **current evidence is insufficient**
There is not enough information to make a recommendation for or against screening.

visual skin examination

A primary care clinician will look at a person's skin from head to toe for moles or spots that look abnormal in color, shape, size, and texture from the rest of the skin.

skin cancer

An abnormal growth of skin cells.

