

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Final Recommendation Statement on Screening for Asymptomatic Bacteriuria

Pregnant people should be screened for bacteria that can lead to harmful urinary tract and kidney infections; nonpregnant adults should not be screened

WASHINGTON, D.C. – September 24, 2019 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today posted a final recommendation and evidence summary on screening for asymptomatic bacteriuria (ASB) in adults. Based on its review of the evidence, the Task Force recommends screening pregnant people for ASB using a urine test. **This is a B recommendation.** The Task Force recommends against screening adults who are not pregnant for ASB. **This is a D recommendation.**

Grades in this recommendation:

B: Recommended.

D: Not Recommended.

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Asymptomatic bacteriuria is when someone has bacteria in their urine without signs or symptoms of a urinary tract infection. Because of changes to the body during pregnancy, pregnant persons with ASB have a higher risk of developing urinary tract and kidney infections that can be harmful for the mother and baby. Pyelonephritis, a severe kidney infection, can cause damage to the kidneys, cause the baby to be born too early, and can even be life-threatening to the mother.

“Screening pregnant people for ASB can help lower the risk of serious infections and health problems for the mother and baby,” says Task Force member Melissa A. Simon, M.D., M.P.H. “The Task Force recommends that clinicians screen all pregnant people for ASB at their first prenatal visit.”

Clinicians screen for ASB with a urine test. If ASB is found, it is treated with antibiotics to help prevent infection.

“If you’re not pregnant, the chances of getting ASB and developing a serious infection from it are small and are outweighed by the potential for serious side effects from taking antibiotics, as well as the growing concerns around antibiotic resistance,” says Task Force member Chyke Doubeni, M.D., M.P.H. “For these reasons, the Task Force recommends against screening for ASB in adults who are not pregnant.”

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: <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org>. The Task Force’s draft recommendation statement and draft evidence review were posted for public comment on the Task Force website from April 23, 2019, to May 20, 2019.

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

Dr. Simon is the George H. Gardner professor of clinical gynecology, the vice chair of clinical research in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and professor of preventive medicine and medical

social sciences at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. She is the founder and director of the Center for Health Equity Transformation and the Chicago Cancer Health Equity Collaborative and a member of the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Dr. Doubeni is the inaugural director of the Mayo Clinic Center for Health Equity and Community Engagement Research, which addresses health disparities throughout the life course and advances the ideal of health equity locally and globally through research and community engagement. Dr. Doubeni is professor of family medicine at Mayo Clinic and provides clinical services in Mayo Clinic's Department of Family Medicine.

Contact: USPSTF Media Coordinator at Newsroom@USPSTF.net / (202) 572-2044