

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

WASHINGTON, D.C. – April 30, 2013 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today released its final recommendation statement on screening for HIV. The Task Force recommends that clinicians screen all people aged 15 to 65, as well as younger adolescents and older adults who are at an increased risk for HIV infection. It also recommends that all pregnant women, including those in labor whose HIV status is unknown, also be screened for HIV.

“While the best way to reduce HIV-related disease and death is to avoid getting infected, screening is also extremely important,” says Task Force member Douglas K. Owens, M.D., M.S. “Nearly a quarter of people with HIV don’t know that they have it, and they’re missing out on a chance to take control of their disease. Universal screening will help identify more people with HIV, allowing them to start combined antiretroviral therapy earlier and live healthier and longer lives.”

The Task Force found that although there is no cure for HIV infection, treating people with HIV earlier can not only reduce their risk of developing AIDS and delay its onset, but it also decreases the chance that they will pass on the infection to someone else. Treating pregnant women also reduces the chances that the virus will be transmitted to their babies.

“HIV is a critical public health problem and, despite recent medical advances, still a devastating diagnosis for the 50,000 people in the United States who contract HIV each year. In order to help reduce the suffering of those with HIV and their loved ones, we must continue finding better ways to prevent and treat this disease,” says Task Force chair Virginia Moyer, M.D., M.P.H.

Other groups, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American College of Physicians, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, have similar recommendations for HIV screening.

“Primary care clinicians can play an important role in reducing HIV-related disease and death,” states Dr. Owens. “That is why our recommendation, which closely aligns with the HIV screening guidelines from the CDC, encourages clinicians to screen their patients for HIV.”

The Task Force’s recommendations have been published online in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, as well as on the Task Force Web site at: <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org>. A fact sheet that explains the recommendation statement in plain language is also available.

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.

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