

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Draft Recommendation Statement on Screening for Hypertension in Adults

Task Force recommends that clinicians screen all adults for high blood pressure

WASHINGTON, D.C. – June 23, 2020 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today posted a draft recommendation statement on screening for hypertension in adults. Based on its review of the evidence, the Task Force recommends that clinicians should screen all adults for high blood pressure to improve the health of their patients. **This is an A recommendation.**

Grade in this recommendation:

A: Recommended.

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Hypertension is when a person has repeatedly high blood pressure measurements over time and in various settings. It affects almost half of all adults in the United States, and if left untreated, can lead to heart attacks, strokes, and kidney and heart failure.

This draft recommendation is consistent with the 2015 final recommendation on this topic.

“You can’t feel when you have high blood pressure, so without screening most people will not know they have hypertension,” says Task Force member Michael J. Barry, M.D. “Screening allows hypertension to be identified so that patients can get the care that they need to stay healthy.”

When someone’s blood pressure is high at their doctor’s office, they should talk with their doctor to determine if they should have their blood pressure re-checked in settings outside of the office. Checking blood pressure at home can help the doctor understand whether the patient has sustained hypertension, which is the chronic health condition of having repeated high blood pressure readings in various settings.

“It’s important for clinicians to determine whether someone only has high blood pressure readings in the doctor’s office, or whether they regularly have high blood pressure readings outside of the doctor’s office,” says Task Force member John B. Wong, M.D. “This distinction affects the most appropriate care that patients will receive from their clinicians.”

The Task Force’s draft recommendation statement and draft evidence review have been posted for public comment on the Task Force website at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org. Comments can be submitted from June 23, 2020, to July 20, 2020 at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/tfcomment.htm.

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. Barry is director of the Informed Medical Decisions Program in the Health Decision Sciences Center at Massachusetts General Hospital. He is also a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and a clinician at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Dr. Wong is chief of the Division of Clinical Decision Making and a primary care clinician in the Department of Medicine at Tufts Medical Center and a professor of medicine at the Tufts University School of Medicine. He is also director of comparative effectiveness research for the Tufts Clinical Translational Science Institute and a professor of medicine in the Tufts University Sackler School of Graduate Biomedical Sciences.

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