

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Draft Recommendation Statement on Screening for Obstructive Sleep Apnea

More research is needed to recommend for or against screening adults without symptoms

WASHINGTON, D.C. – March 29, 2022 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today posted a draft recommendation statement on screening for obstructive sleep apnea. The Task Force determined there is not enough evidence to make a recommendation for or against screening for sleep apnea. **This is an I statement.**

Grade in this recommendation:

I: The balance of benefits and harms cannot be determined.

[Learn more here](#)

This recommendation applies to adults, ages 18 and older, who do not have signs or symptoms of sleep apnea. It also applies to adults with unrecognized symptoms of sleep apnea, which includes people who are not aware of their symptoms or who do not report symptoms to their healthcare professional.

Obstructive sleep apnea is a health condition in which part or all of a person's airway gets blocked during sleep, causing them to repeatedly stop breathing. Untreated sleep apnea is associated with heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, and those with severe cases may be more likely to die. Symptoms of sleep apnea include loud snoring, excessive daytime sleepiness, and choking or gasping during sleep.

"Having sleep apnea negatively affects quality of life and is linked to health issues such as heart disease and strokes," says Task Force member Gbenga Ogedegbe, M.D., M.P.H. "Unfortunately, there's limited evidence on whether screening people who do not have signs or symptoms of sleep apnea leads to improved health, so we are calling for more research."

People at increased risk for sleep apnea include men, postmenopausal women, older adults ages 40–70, people with a higher BMI, and people with a physical irregularity that could affect their upper airway and breathing. Black, Native American, and Latino populations have higher rates of sleep apnea compared to White people, which is thought to be related to higher rates of obesity and other health issues in these groups.

"Most people don't discuss sleep apnea symptoms with their primary care clinician," says Task Force member Martha Kubik, Ph.D., R.N. "Because the evidence is unclear on whether screening for sleep apnea in people without signs or symptoms is beneficial, healthcare professionals should use their judgment to guide their decision to screen."

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 March 29, 2022, to April 25, 2022, 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 people nationwide by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications.

Dr. Ogedegbe is the inaugural and founding director of the Institute for Excellence in Health Equity at NYU Langone Health. He is the Dr. Adolph and Margaret Berger Professor of Medicine and Population Health at NYU Grossman School of Medicine, where he serves as the director of the Center for Healthful Behavior Change, Division of Health and Behavior in the Department of Population Health. Dr. Ogedegbe is a member of the National Academy of Medicine.

Dr. Kubik is a professor with the School of Nursing, College of Health and Human Services at George Mason University. She is a nurse scientist, active researcher, and past standing member on the National Institutes of Health's Community-Level Health Promotion Study Section. Dr. Kubik is an advanced practice nurse and fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.

Contact: USPSTF Media Coordinator at Newsroom@USPSTF.net / (301) 951-9203