

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Final Recommendation Statement on Prediabetes and Type 2 Diabetes Screening in Youth

More research is needed to recommend for or against screening children and teens without signs or symptoms

WASHINGTON, D.C. – September 13, 2022 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today posted a final recommendation statement on screening for prediabetes and type 2 diabetes in children and adolescents. The Task Force determined there is not enough evidence to make a recommendation for or against screening. **This is an I statement.**

This recommendation applies to children and teens under the age of 18 who have not been previously diagnosed with prediabetes or diabetes and who do not have signs or symptoms of either condition. This recommendation does not apply to youth who are pregnant. The Task Force has a separate recommendation on screening for gestational diabetes.

Grade in this recommendation:

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

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Diabetes affects how the body controls or uses glucose, or blood sugar. Type 2 diabetes is when the body does not properly use insulin and isn't able to keep blood sugar at a normal level. When blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not yet high enough to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes, a person has prediabetes. While type 2 diabetes was once considered a health condition only found in adults, the number of children and teens with prediabetes and type 2 diabetes is rising, most likely due to increasing rates of overweight and obesity.

"The rate of prediabetes and type 2 diabetes in youth is increasing. The challenge is that we don't have the evidence to tell us whether or not screening in primary care helps improve the health of children and teens," says Task Force member Michael Cabana, M.D., M.A., M.P.H. "It is important that healthcare professionals be aware of the signs and symptoms of prediabetes and type 2 diabetes and use their judgment when determining whether or not to screen youth."

Youth who have obesity and carry excess weight, especially in the midsection, are at the highest risk for developing prediabetes or type 2 diabetes. Family history is also a strong risk factor. It is important to note that there are significant health disparities among people who have type 2 diabetes.

"There are striking inequities in the prevalence of type 2 diabetes, with American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Black, and Hispanic/Latino youth experiencing a significantly higher risk than White youth," says Task Force member Martha Kubik, Ph.D., R.N. "Although the evidence is limited in all children and teens, the Task Force urges future research to specifically focus on those populations who experience a higher burden of type 2 diabetes."

While there is limited evidence on screening for prediabetes and diabetes in youth, it is important for children and teens to be physically active and have a healthy diet. This can help maintain a healthy weight and lower the risk of diabetes.

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: <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org>. A draft version of the recommendation statement and evidence review were available for public comment from December 14, 2021, to January 18, 2022.

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. Cabana is a general pediatrician and professor of pediatrics and the chair of the Department of Pediatrics at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He is also physician-in-chief at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore.

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.

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