

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Final Recommendation Statements on Screening for Anxiety Disorders, Depression, and Suicide Risk in Adults

Screening can help identify anxiety disorders and depression in many adults; more research is needed on whether screening can help prevent suicide in adults.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – June 20, 2023 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published final recommendation statements on screening for depression and suicide risk in adults and screening for anxiety disorders in adults. For the first time, the Task Force is recommending screening adults younger than 65 for anxiety disorders. **This is a B grade.** The Task Force continues to recommend screening all adults, including those who are pregnant and postpartum, for depression. **This is a B grade.** There is not enough evidence to recommend for or against screening for suicide risk in all adults or screening for anxiety disorders in adults age 65 or older. **These are I statements.** These final recommendations are only for people without recognized signs or symptoms of these conditions.

Grades in these recommendations:

B: Recommended.

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

[Learn more here](#)

Anxiety disorders, depression, and suicidal thoughts or behaviors are mental health conditions affecting the lives of many adults in the United States. There are several forms of anxiety disorders, including generalized anxiety disorder and social anxiety disorder, but all forms are characterized by excessive fear or worry that interferes with normal activities. Depression, or major depressive disorder, is a condition that negatively affects how people feel, think, and act. Depression can also occur during pregnancy or up to one year after childbirth; this is known as perinatal depression.

"Amid the mental health crisis in the United States, the Task Force worked to provide primary care professionals and their patients with recommendations on evidence-based screening," says Task Force vice chair Michael Silverstein, M.D., M.P.H. "Fortunately, screening all adults for depression, including those who are pregnant and postpartum, and screening adults younger than 65 for anxiety disorders is effective in identifying these conditions so adults can receive the care they need."

For most adults, screening and follow-up care can reduce symptoms of anxiety disorders and depression. While anxiety disorders can affect people of all ages, there is limited evidence on the benefits and harms of screening adults 65 or older. More research is also critically needed on the role of screening for suicide risk. Although suicide is tragically a leading cause of death among adults, there is not enough evidence on whether screening those without recognized signs or symptoms helps prevent suicide.

"We are urgently calling for more research to determine the effectiveness of screening all adults for suicide risk and screening adults 65 and older for anxiety disorders," says Task Force member Gbenga Ogedegbe, M.D., M.P.H. "The Task Force deeply cares about the mental health of people nationwide and hopes that future research can help us provide healthcare professionals with evidence-based ways to keep their patients healthy."

The Task Force recognizes that screening is only the first step in helping adults with anxiety and depression. People who screen positive need further evaluation to determine if they have an anxiety disorder or depression. After diagnosis, people should participate in shared decision making with their healthcare professionals to identify the treatment or combination of treatments that are right for them, and then be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that the chosen treatment is effective. It is important to underscore that these

recommendations only apply to people without recognized signs or symptoms of these conditions. It is essential that healthcare professionals connect any individual who expresses concerns about anxiety disorders, depression, or suicide or reports symptoms of these conditions to appropriate care.

The Task Force's final recommendation statements and corresponding evidence summaries 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>. A draft version of the recommendation statements and evidence reviews were available for public comment from September 20, 2022, to October 17, 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. Silverstein is the George Hazard Crooker University professor of health services, policy, and practice at the Brown University School of Public Health and the director of Brown University's Hassenfeld Child Health Innovation Institute, which is charged with eliminating health inequities in pregnancy and childhood for Rhode Island families.

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. Dr. Ogedegbe is a member of the National Academy of Medicine.

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