



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

*More research is needed for the Task Force to recommend for or against screening for celiac disease
in people who have no signs or symptoms*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – March 28, 2017 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation statement and evidence summary on screening for celiac disease in people without any signs or symptoms of the condition. After reviewing the evidence, the Task Force found that more research is needed before it can make a recommendation for or against screening for celiac disease in people without signs or symptoms. This is an **I statement**.

Celiac disease is an immune disorder in which people cannot eat foods containing gluten, a protein found in wheat, rye, and barley, because it damages the inner lining of their small intestine and prevents absorption of nutrients. People who have a family history of celiac disease or have type 1 diabetes are at increased risk for the disease.

Grade in this recommendation:

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

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“This is not a recommendation against screening for celiac disease,” says Task Force member Ann E. Kurth, Ph.D., C.N.M., M.S.N., M.P.H. “At this time, there simply is not enough evidence to determine the benefits and harms of screening for celiac disease in people without signs or symptoms of the condition, so the Task Force is calling for more research. Clinicians should use their judgment when deciding whom to screen.”

This is the first time that the Task Force has reviewed the evidence and made a statement on screening for celiac disease.

The initial symptoms of celiac can be subtle; it can take several years to recognize the signs and symptoms of celiac disease. Symptoms of celiac disease may include diarrhea, abdominal pain, and unexplained weight loss, or other symptoms such as fatigue or anemia.

“Because some people may have celiac disease without experiencing or recognizing that they have signs or symptoms, the Task Force encourages people who are concerned about the possibility of having celiac disease to talk to their primary care doctor about whether screening is appropriate for them,” says Task Force member Alex H. Krist, M.D., M.P.H.

This recommendation statement has been published online in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, as well as on the Task Force Web site at: <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org>. A draft version of this recommendation statement was posted for public comment on the USPSTF Web site from May 3 to May 30, 2016.

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. Kurth is dean of the Yale School of Nursing and the Linda Koch Lorimer professor of nursing. Dr. Kurth is an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine) and a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing and the New York Academy of Medicine. Dr. Kurth is a clinically trained epidemiologist and certified nurse-midwife who studies approaches to improving HIV and sexually transmitted infection prevention, screening, and care; reproductive health; and global health workforce/system strengthening efforts.

Dr. Krist is an associate professor of family medicine and population health at Virginia Commonwealth University and an active clinician and teacher at the Fairfax Family Practice Residency. He is codirector of the Virginia Ambulatory Care Outcomes Research Network and director of community-engaged research at the Center for Clinical and Translational Research.

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