

Task Force Issues Final Recommendation Statement on Counseling About Healthy Weight and Weight Gain in Pregnancy

*Clinicians can help their patients maintain a healthy weight by offering
counseling throughout pregnancy*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – May 25, 2021 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation statement on behavioral counseling interventions to support healthy weight and weight gain in pregnancy. For the first time, the Task Force recommends that clinicians offer pregnant people effective counseling programs to help them maintain a healthy amount of weight and prevent excess weight gain. **This is a B recommendation.**

Grade in this recommendation:

B: Recommended.

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While gaining weight is part of pregnancy, gaining too much weight can be harmful for pregnant people and their babies. It can lead to a higher risk of gestational diabetes, cesarean deliveries, and babies who are born with a high birth weight.

“Healthy weight gain during pregnancy is important for both pregnant people and their babies,” says Task Force member Aaron Caughey, M.D., M.P.P., M.P.H., Ph.D. “The Task Force found that clinicians can help their patients maintain a healthy weight by offering effective counseling throughout pregnancy.”

Counseling interventions focus on topics including nutrition, physical activity, and lifestyle or behavior changes. They can be offered in different settings, formats, and by a variety of clinicians, ranging from discussions during routine office visits to programs focused on nutrition and exercise. Counseling generally lasts for more than 15 minutes, and it is important that these messages are reinforced throughout pregnancy, rather than as a single discussion.

“Healthy weight gain during pregnancy lowers the risk for gestational diabetes, babies born with a high birth weight, and emergency cesarean sections,” says Task Force member Chien-Wen Tseng, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.E.E. “There are many effective counseling interventions that can help, so clinicians should work with their patients to identify the best fit.”

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 www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org. A draft version of the recommendation statement and evidence review were available for public comment from December 8, 2020, to January 11, 2021.

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. Caughey is a professor in and chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the associate dean for Women’s Health Research and Policy at Oregon Health & Science University. He is

the founder and chair of the Oregon Perinatal Collaborative, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which aims to improve outcomes for women and infants through guidelines and policies, working with all the health systems in the state.

Dr. Tseng is the Hawaii Medical Service Association endowed chair in health services and quality research, a professor, and the research director in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine. She is also a physician investigator with the nonprofit Pacific Health Research and Education Institute.

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