

## U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommends Against Screening Healthy Adults for Carotid Artery Stenosis

Task Force finds that screening the general adult population leads to many false-positive test results and unnecessary harms

WASHINGTON, D.C. – July 8, 2014 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation statement and final evidence summary on screening adults for carotid artery stenosis (CAS), recommending against screening in the general adult population. This is a D recommendation.

Carotid artery stenosis—the narrowing of the arteries that run along both sides of the neck and supply blood to the brain—is one of many risk factors for stroke. Stroke is a leading cause of death and disability in the United States and can be devastating to those affected.

“Screening for carotid artery stenosis often leads to follow-up testing and surgeries that can cause serious harms, including stroke, heart attack, or death,” says Task Force member Jessica Herzstein, M.D., M.P.H. “Also, CAS is uncommon in the general adult population, so screening everyone would lead to many false-positive results.” False-positive results are when a test shows that a person has a condition that he or she actually does not have.

This recommendation only applies to people without symptoms or history of stroke. Adults with a history of stroke, transient ischemic attack (“mini-stroke”), or signs and symptoms of stroke are not included in this recommendation and should seek the advice of their clinicians.

“The best way to prevent a stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases, is to focus on the things we know work,” says Task Force chair Michael LeFevre, M.D., M.S.P.H. “This includes controlling high blood pressure and cholesterol, not smoking, being physically active, maintaining a healthy weight, and eating a healthful diet.”

The Task Force’s final recommendation statement has been published online in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, as well as on the Task Force Web site at [www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org](http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org). A fact sheet that explains the recommendation statement in plain language is also available. A draft version of this recommendation was available for public comment from February 18 to March 17, 2014.

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.

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