

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Two New Recommendations:

Screening for and Management of Obesity in Adults

Behavioral Counseling Interventions to Promote a Healthful Diet and Physical Activity for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in Adults

WASHINGTON, D.C. – June 26, 2012 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today released two separate final recommendations – one on screening for and management of obesity in adults and the other on behavioral counseling interventions to promote a healthful diet and physical activity for cardiovascular disease prevention in adults.

The Task Force recommends that primary care clinicians screen adults for obesity. By definition, any person with a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher is obese. People who are obese are more likely to develop heart disease and many types of cancer, and die early. The Task Force further recommends that health care professionals offer or refer obese persons to a comprehensive weight loss and behavior management program with 12 to 26 sessions in the first year.

“Obesity is a very serious health problem in the United States, and in the past 30 years, obesity rates have dramatically increased,” said Task Force member David Grossman, M.D., M.P.H. “The good news is that even modest weight loss can reduce health risks for people who are obese. And, there is strong scientific evidence that shows that intensive programs with 12 to 26 sessions in the first year can help people manage their weight.”

While obesity and encouraging healthy lifestyle choices are related health issues, Dr. Grossman emphasized that the Task Force issued two separate recommendations. He explained, “The Task Force’s obesity screening recommendation focuses on offering or referring obese patients to comprehensive weight management programs. This recommendation is intended to improve all health outcomes, and not only risks for cardiovascular disease. The healthy lifestyles recommendation focuses only on counseling to encourage healthy lifestyle choices to prevent cardiovascular disease.”

In a separate recommendation, the Task Force determined that for people who have low risk for heart disease, counseling to encourage healthy lifestyle choices, such as a healthful diet and physical activity, offers only small benefits in reducing the risk for cardiovascular disease. The Task Force also stated that this counseling may be beneficial to some people, depending on their individual risk factors, including known cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.

“When determining which people may benefit the most from counseling, primary care providers may consider patient readiness for change, social support and community resources that support behavioral change, and other health care and preventive service priorities,” said Dr. Grossman.

The Task Force’s recommendations have been published online in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, as well as on the Task Force Web site at <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org>. A fact sheet that explains the recommendation statement in plain language is also available.

The Task Force is an independent group 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.

Contact: [Ana Fullmer at Newsroom@USPSTF.net](mailto:Ana.Fullmer@USPSTF.net) / (202) 350-6668