

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Finds Insufficient Evidence on Whether Multivitamins Prevent Cardiovascular Disease and Cancer

WASHINGTON, D.C. – February 25, 2014 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today posted its final recommendation statement on vitamin, mineral, and multivitamin supplements for the prevention of cardiovascular disease and cancer. However, the Task Force concluded there is not enough evidence to determine the effectiveness of taking vitamins and minerals to prevent cardiovascular disease or cancer. This is an I statement.

Many people take vitamins and mineral supplements to improve or maintain overall health. However, this recommendation is limited to use of these vitamins and supplements specifically for the prevention of cardiovascular disease and cancer.

“Cardiovascular disease and cancer have a significant health impact in America, and we all want to find ways to prevent these diseases,” says Task Force chair Virginia Moyer, M.D., M.P.H. “However, we found that there is not enough evidence to determine whether taking single or paired nutrients or a multivitamin helps to prevent cardiovascular disease or cancer.”

Additionally, there are two vitamins that the Task Force recommends against using: beta-carotene and vitamin E. This is a D grade recommendation. “The evidence shows that there is no benefit to taking vitamin E and that beta-carotene can be harmful because it increases the risk of lung cancer in people who are already at increased risk for the disease,” says Task Force co-chair Michael LeFevre, M.D., M.S.P.H. “Due to the uncertain benefit of vitamin supplements to prevent cardiovascular disease and cancer, health care professionals should use their best judgment and consider their patient’s health history, values, and preferences when having conversations about nutritional supplements.”

For most people the best way to get important nutrients essential for health is through a balanced diet. Adequate nutrition by eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, and seafood have been associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Before finalizing this recommendation, the Task Force posted a draft version for public comment in November 2013. The Task Force’s final recommendation statement is published online in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, as well as on the Task Force Web site at: www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org. A fact sheet that explains the recommendation statement in plain language is also available.

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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