

This fact sheet explains the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force's (Task Force) draft recommendation statement on hepatitis B virus infection in adolescents and adults. It also tells you how you can send comments about the draft recommendation to the Task Force. Comments may be submitted from May 5, 2020 to June 1, 2020. The Task Force welcomes your comments.

Screening for Hepatitis B Virus Infection in Adolescents and Adults

The Task Force issued a **draft recommendation statement** on *Screening for Hepatitis B Virus Infection in Adolescents and Adults*. The Task Force found that clinicians should screen teens and adults who are at increased risk for hepatitis B.

This draft recommendation statement applies only to

teens and adults who are at increased risk for hepatitis B but do not have signs or symptoms of hepatitis B. It does not apply to pregnant people. The Task Force has a separate recommendation to screen for hepatitis B during pregnancy (see the link to this recommendation at the end of this document).

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a viral infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis B virus. Hepatitis B infection causes damage to the liver which can range from a mild short-term illness to a serious, lifelong issue, such as liver disease or liver cancer.

Facts About Hepatitis B

About 860,000 people in the United States are living with hepatitis B. If left untreated, hepatitis B can lead to serious health problems, including cancer and liver failure.

People at the greatest risk for hepatitis B infection are often infected at birth. These include:

- People born in countries where hepatitis B is common, such as Africa and Asia, the Pacific Islands, and parts of South America
- People born in the United States who were not vaccinated against hepatitis B when they were babies and whose parents came from countries where hepatitis B is common

Other people at increased risk include people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, people with HIV, people who have sex with a partner who has hepatitis B, and people who live with someone who is infected with HBV.

Hepatitis B can be prevented with vaccination. Vaccination is very effective, and in the United States it is recommended for all babies, anyone younger than 19 who did not get vaccinated as a baby, and adults who are at high risk for getting the infection.

Screening for Hepatitis B

Screening for hepatitis B infection involves a simple blood test that looks for certain antibodies (disease-fighting proteins) in the blood.

Screening can help detect hepatitis B early, when treatment is more likely to stop it from becoming serious. Many times, when people are infected with hepatitis B, they have no signs or symptoms of the infection. This means that they can spread the virus to others without knowing it.

Potential Benefits and Harms of Screening for High Blood Pressure

The Task Force looked at the evidence on the benefits of screening and treatment for hepatitis B. The Task Force found that screening for hepatitis B can help detect the virus early, when it is easier to treat, and that treatment for hepatitis B consistently leads to better health outcomes.

The Task Force also reviewed the evidence on the harms of screening for hepatitis B. The Task Force did not find any studies that directly looked at the harms of screening for hepatitis B but determined that the harms of screening are likely to be small because the screening test is a simple blood test.

The Task Force also looked at how often people should be screened but did not find any evidence. If you are at increased risk for hepatitis B, talk to your clinician about how frequently you should be screened for hepatitis B.

The Draft Recommendation on Screening for Hepatitis B: What Does it Mean?

Here is the Task Force's draft recommendation on screening for hepatitis B. It is based on the quality and strength of the evidence about the potential benefits and harms of screening for this purpose. It is also based on the size of the potential benefits and harms. Task Force recommendation grades are explained in the box at the end of this fact sheet.

When the Task Force recommends behavioral counseling (**B Grade**), it is because there are more potential benefits than harms.

Before you send comments to the Task Force, you may want to read the full [draft recommendation statement](#). The recommendation statement explains the evidence the Task Force reviewed and how it decided on the grade. An [evidence document](#) provides more detail about the scientific studies the Task Force reviewed.

1 The USPSTF recommends *screening* for hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection in *adolescents and adults* at *increased risk for infection*. (**B Grade**)

Notes

1 *screening*
A blood test to identify hepatitis B infection

adolescents and adults
Teens and adults over the age of 12 who are not pregnant

increased risk for infection
Personal circumstances and behaviors that increase the likelihood an individual may be infected with hepatitis B, such as people born in countries where hepatitis B is common, and people born in the US who were not vaccinated

hepatitis B
A virus that infects the liver and is spread through contact with the blood and body fluids of an infected person





What is the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force?

The Task Force is an independent, non-federal, volunteer group of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine. The Task Force works to improve the health of all Americans by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services, such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medicines. The recommendations apply to people with no signs or symptoms of the disease being discussed.

To develop a recommendation statement, Task Force members consider the best available science and research on a topic. For each topic, the Task Force posts draft documents for public comment, including a [draft recommendation statement](#). All comments are reviewed and considered in developing the final recommendation statement. To learn more, visit the [Task Force website](#).

USPSTF Recommendation Grades	
Grade	Definition
A	Recommended.
B	Recommended.
C	Recommendation depends on the patient's situation.
D	Not recommended.
I statement	There is not enough evidence to make a recommendation.

Click Here to Learn More About Screening for Hepatitis B

-  **Protect Yourself from Hepatitis B**
(healthfinder.gov)
-  **Hepatitis B Questions and Answers for the Public**
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
-  **Hepatitis B Basics**
(U.S. Department of Health & Human Services)
-  **Hepatitis B**
(MedlinePlus)

[Click Here](#) to Comment on the Draft Recommendation



The Task Force welcomes comments on this draft recommendation.



Comments must be received between May 5, 2020 and June 1, 2020.



All comments will be considered for use in writing final recommendations.