Understanding Task Force Draft Recommendations

This fact sheet explains the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force’s (Task Force) draft recommendation statement on screening for hypertensive disorders of pregnancy. It also tells you how you can send comments about the draft recommendation to the Task Force. Comments may be submitted from February 7, 2023, to March 6, 2023. The Task Force welcomes your comments.

Screening for Hypertensive Disorders of Pregnancy

The Task Force issued a draft recommendation statement on Screening for Hypertensive Disorders of Pregnancy.

The Task Force recommends that all pregnant people should have their blood pressure measured at each prenatal visit to help identify and prevent serious health issues related to hypertensive disorders of pregnancy.

This draft recommendation applies to all pregnant people who do not have a known diagnosis of hypertension.

Facts About Hypertensive Disorders of Pregnancy

Hypertensive disorders of pregnancy are among the leading causes of serious complications and death for pregnant people in the United States. These conditions can lead to complications for both the pregnant person and baby. For the pregnant person, complications include stroke, the peeling of the retina from the eye (known as retinal detachment), organ damage or failure, and seizures. Complications for the baby include not growing as expected, low birth weight, and stillbirth.

While all pregnant people are at risk for hypertensive disorders of pregnancy and should be screened, there are certain risk factors that put certain people at increased risk. This includes a personal or family history of eclampsia or preeclampsia, a previous adverse pregnancy outcome, having gestational diabetes or chronic hypertension, being pregnant with more than one baby or being pregnant for the first time, having a high BMI prior to pregnancy, and being 35 years or older. Additionally, Black, American Indian, and Alaska Native people are much more likely to both have and die from a hypertensive disorder of pregnancy. Importantly, this is not due to biologic differences but rather to social inequities.

Potential Benefits and Harms of Screening for Hypertensive Disorders of Pregnancy

The Task Force found that screening pregnant people can help identify and prevent serious health issues related to hypertensive disorders of pregnancy. When someone screens positive, it is important the person receives evidence-based management of their condition.
The harms of treatment can include the baby being born too early, newborn complications, having a c-section, and negative effects from taking medications, such as headache and nausea. However, the benefits of screening and treatment outweigh the harms.

**The Draft Recommendation on Screening for Hypertensive Disorders of Pregnancy: What Does It Mean?**

Here is the Task Force’s draft recommendation on screening for hypertensive disorders in pregnancy. 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 issues a **B Grade**, it recommends screening because it has more potential benefits than potential harms.

Before you send comments to the Task Force, you may want to read the *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.

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**Notes**

1. **screening**
   - Using a blood pressure cuff to measure blood pressure during a prenatal visit.

2. **hypertensive disorders**
   - Conditions during pregnancy that are marked by elevated blood pressure when a person did not have high blood pressure before pregnancy. These conditions include gestational hypertension, preeclampsia/eclampsia, and chronic hypertension with and without superimposed preeclampsia.
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 people nationwide 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**.

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Click Here to Comment on the Draft Recommendation

The Task Force welcomes comments on this draft recommendation. Comments must be received between February 7, 2023 and March 6, 2023. All comments will be considered for use in writing final recommendations.