

This fact sheet explains the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force's (Task Force) draft recommendation statement on behavioral counseling interventions to promote a healthy diet and physical activity for cardiovascular disease (CVD) prevention in adults with cardiovascular risk factors. It also tells you how you can send comments about the draft recommendation to the Task Force. Comments may be submitted from May 12, 2020, to June 8, 2020. The Task Force welcomes your comments.

Behavioral Counseling Interventions to Promote a Healthy Diet and Physical Activity for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in Adults With Cardiovascular Risk Factors

The Task Force issued a **draft recommendation statement** on *Behavioral Counseling Interventions to Promote a Healthy Diet and Physical Activity for CVD Prevention in Adults With Cardiovascular Risk Factors*.

The Task Force recommends that clinicians offer interventions that promote a healthy diet and physical activity to help adults at risk for CVD stay healthy.

What is *cardiovascular disease*?

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a term for conditions that affect the heart or blood vessels, including heart attacks, heart disease, and stroke.

Facts About Cardiovascular Disease and Cardiovascular Risk Factors

CVD, which includes heart attacks and stroke, is one of the leading causes of death in the United States. Risk factors for CVD are very common; nearly half of all adults have at least one risk factor for CVD.

While there are many CVD risk factors, this recommendation applies to adults age 18 years and older with specific cardiovascular risk factors, such as high blood pressure or unhealthy cholesterol levels. It also applies to adults who have a combination of risk factors (e.g., high blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess body fat around the waist, abnormal cholesterol levels, and history of smoking). Clinicians can use the combination of some of these factors to identify those at increased risk who could benefit from behavioral counseling interventions.

Adults who have diabetes or have obesity are not included in this recommendation as interventions to reduce their CVD risk are covered in other Task Force recommendations. Related Task Force recommendations are included at the end of this document.

Facts About Interventions to Promote a Healthy Lifestyle

Behavioral counseling interventions can help people at increased risk for CVD lower their risk of heart attacks and strokes. These programs vary, but typically:

- Aim to improve diet and increase physical activity.
- Are done in an individual or group setting and are provided in-person, over the phone, or online.
- Are led by a trained counselor who provides education, helps people set goals, shares tools, and stays in regular contact.
 - The trained counselor can be a primary care clinician or another professional, such as dietitians or exercise specialists.

Potential Benefits and Harms of Screening for High Blood Pressure

The Task Force reviewed studies on the benefits and harms of behavioral counseling interventions to improve diet and increase physical activity to help reduce risk for CVD.

Evidence shows that behavioral counseling interventions have a number of benefits. These benefits include reduced overall cardiovascular disease events, such as a heart attack and stroke. They also include lowering blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar, as well as reducing body weight. Behavioral counseling interventions also improve healthy eating habits.

Few studies reported harms of interventions. The Task Force determined that the harms are likely to be small because of the nature of the interventions.

The Draft Recommendation on Interventions for CVD Prevention in Adults With Risk Factors: What Does It Mean?

Here is the Task Force's draft recommendation on behavioral counseling interventions to promote a healthy diet and physical activity for CVD prevention in adults with cardiovascular risk factors. It is based on the quality and strength of the evidence about the potential benefits and harms of counseling 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 screening (**Grade B**), it is because it has more potential benefits than potential 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 offering or referring adults with *cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk factors* to *behavioral counseling interventions* to promote a *healthy diet and physical activity*. (**B Grade**)

Notes

1 *cardiovascular disease (CVD)*
Examples include heart attack and stroke.

risk factors

This recommendation focuses on individuals with specific CVD risk factors (high blood pressure and unhealthy cholesterol levels) or a combination of some risk factors (e.g., high blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess body fat around the waist, and abnormal cholesterol levels). These combinations of risk factors are also known as metabolic syndrome. Other Task Force recommendations focus on CVD prevention in individuals with risk factors such as obesity and tobacco use (*see the end of this document for links to other recommendations*).

behavioral counseling interventions

Programs that help people make changes to improve their diet, increase physical activity, and limit unhealthy behaviors. They include face-to-face, telephone, and online interactions over multiple sessions over several months.

healthy diet and physical activity

A healthy diet focuses on increasing consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy, lean proteins, and oils, and decreasing consumption of foods with high sodium levels, saturated- or trans fats, and added sugars. Physical activity includes various types of exercise and activities to strengthen muscles in the body. Guidelines for a healthy diet and physical activity can be found at health.gov.







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 Cardiovascular Disease and Healthy Lifestyle

-  **Heart Disease**
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
-  **Heart Disease and Stroke**
(Healthy People 2020)
-  **Help Prevent Heart Disease**
(National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
-  **How to Prevent Heart Disease**
(MedlinePlus)
-  **Million Hearts® 2022**
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
-  **health.gov**
(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

Click Here for Other Task Force Recommendations Related to CVD Prevention

-  [Behavioral Weight Loss Interventions to Prevent Obesity-Related Morbidity and Mortality in Adults](#)
-  [Screening for Abnormal Blood Glucose and Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus](#)
-  [Behavioral and Pharmacotherapy Interventions for Tobacco Smoking Cessation in Adults, Including Pregnant Women](#)
-  [Behavioral Counseling to Promote a Healthful Diet and Physical Activity for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in Adults Without Cardiovascular Risk Factors](#)

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



The Task Force welcomes comments on this draft recommendation.



Comments must be received between May 12, 2020 and June 8, 2020.



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