

# Understanding Task Force Draft Recommendations

This fact sheet explains the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force's (Task Force) draft recommendation statement on behavioral counseling to promote a healthy diet and physical activity for cardiovascular disease prevention in adults without cardiovascular disease risk factors. It also tells you how you can send comments about the draft recommendation to the Task Force. Comments may be submitted from January 18, 2022 to February 14, 2022. The Task Force welcomes your comments.

## Behavioral Counseling to Promote a Healthy Diet and Physical Activity for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in Adults Without Cardiovascular Disease Risk Factors

The Task Force issued a **draft recommendation statement** on *Behavioral Counseling to Promote a Healthy Diet and Physical Activity for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in Adults Without Cardiovascular Disease Risk Factors*.

The Task Force recommends clinicians decide together with their patients who do not have risk factors for cardiovascular disease (CVD) whether counseling interventions on healthy diet and physical activity might help them prevent heart attack and stroke.

This recommendation applies to adults ages 18 and older who do not have known CVD risk factors, including high blood pressure, unhealthy cholesterol levels, and high blood sugar. This recommendation does not apply to those who have obesity.

### Facts About CVD and Counseling to Promote a Healthy Diet and Physical Activity

Cardiovascular disease, which includes heart attack and stroke, is the leading killer of adults in the United States, accounting for about one in three deaths. Everyone can improve their health and help prevent CVD by eating a healthy diet and participating in physical activity.

Behavioral counseling interventions to prevent CVD involve a trained professional delivering dietary or physical activity advice. This includes advice on eating more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy, and lean proteins, using healthy oils, preparing healthy meals, and understanding how to read food labels. It can also include advice on increasing activity, such as walking. The trained professional can be a clinician or another health professional, such as a dietician or exercise specialist.

Counseling interventions can be delivered in a variety of ways, including in-person or remotely, individually, or in a group setting. In-person activities can be followed by calls or emails, and remote activities can include print materials, telephone calls, and technology-based activities.

People who are interested in making changes to their diet and physical activity are most likely to benefit from behavioral counseling. Additional factors that can help determine if counseling might be helpful and, if so, which approach is best, include consideration of the patient's goals and motivations, activity and ability, circumstances and personal preferences, and the availability of healthy foods and safe places to exercise. Counseling interventions by a trained professional can also engage and support patients to help them overcome barriers and maintain a healthy lifestyle based on their individual circumstances.



#### What is cardiovascular disease?

Cardiovascular disease is a group of conditions that affect the heart or blood vessels and may lead to heart attacks and stroke.

# Counseling to Promote a Healthy Diet and Physical Activity in Adults Without CVD Risk Factors

## Potential Benefits and Harms of Behavioral Counseling Interventions

Based on the evidence, the benefits of counseling intervention are small overall, and some people would benefit from this type of intervention.

Those who are motivated for change are most likely to benefit, so it is important that clinicians and patients decide together whether counseling interventions might be helpful based on individual circumstances.

The Task Force found that the harms of counseling are likely to be small.

## The Draft Recommendation on Screening for Counseling to Promote a Healthy Diet and Physical Activity in Adults Without CVD Risk Factors: What Does It Mean?

Here is the Task Force's draft recommendation on behavioral counseling to promote a healthy diet and physical activity for CVD prevention in adults without cardiovascular disease risk factors. It is based on the quality and strength of the evidence about the potential benefits and harms of counseling for the prevention of cardiovascular disease. 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 **C Grade**, it recommends that clinicians decide together with their patients about counseling after taking a person's individual situation into account.

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.

1 The USPSTF recommends that clinicians **individualize the decision** to offer or refer adults without **cardiovascular disease risk factors** to **behavioral counseling interventions** to promote a **healthy diet** and **physical activity**. **(C Grade)**

## Notes

### 1 individualize the decision

Clinicians should consider patients' individual circumstances, including interest and readiness to make changes when discussing behavioral counseling with a patient.

### cardiovascular disease

Group of conditions that affect the heart or blood vessels and may lead to heart attacks and stroke.

### risk factors

CVD risk factors include high blood pressure, unhealthy cholesterol levels, and high blood sugar.

### behavioral counseling interventions

Behavioral counseling interventions involve a trained professional delivering dietary or physical activity advice.

### healthy diet

A balance and variety of foods and drinks that let people maintain a healthy weight, support health, and prevent disease.

### physical activity

Activities like walking that enhance or maintain overall health and physical fitness.

# Counseling to Promote a Healthy Diet and Physical Activity in Adults Without CVD Risk Factors

## 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**.

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.

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-  **Keep Your Heart Healthy**  
(MyHealthfinder)
-  **MyPlate**  
(U.S. Department of Agriculture)
-  **How Much Physical Activity Do Adults Need?**  
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
-  **Heart-Healthy Living**  
(National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)

[Click Here to Learn More About Related Task Force Recommendations](#)

-  **Behavioral Counseling Interventions to Promote a Healthy Diet and Physical Activity for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in Adults With Cardiovascular Risk Factors**
-  **Behavioral Weight Loss Interventions to Prevent Obesity-Related Morbidity and Mortality in Adults**

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



The Task Force welcomes comments on this draft recommendation.



Comments must be received between January 18, 2022 and February 14, 2022.



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