

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Final Recommendation Statement on Screening Children for Lipid Disorders

Task Force determines that more research is needed to recommend for or against screening children and adolescents for high cholesterol

WASHINGTON, D.C. – July 18, 2023 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation statement on screening for lipid disorders (high cholesterol) in children and adolescents. Based on its review, the Task Force determined that the current evidence is insufficient to recommend for or against screening for lipid disorders in all children and adolescents age 20 years or younger. **This is an I statement.** This I statement is for children and adolescents who do not have signs, symptoms, or a known diagnosis of a cholesterol disorder.

Grade in this recommendation:

I: The balance of benefits and harms cannot be determined.

[Learn more here](#)

The Task Force looked at the evidence on screening for two types of cholesterol disorders in children and adolescents: 1) high cholesterol from a genetic mutation (familial hypercholesterolemia) and 2) high cholesterol related to environmental factors such as a high-fat diet, sedentary lifestyle, and obesity (multifactorial dyslipidemia).

“The foundation of Task Force recommendations is a careful assessment of the evidence on both benefits and harms. In this case, we don’t have enough evidence to tell us whether or not screening all children and adolescents for high cholesterol is beneficial,” says Task Force member Li Li, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H. “We are calling for more research to address this important issue, specifically on whether screening for high cholesterol in childhood helps to prevent premature heart attacks, strokes, and death in adulthood.”

It is important to note that this is not a recommendation for or against screening youth for cholesterol disorders. There is limited evidence on the benefits and harms of screening all children and teens without symptoms or a known cholesterol disorder. In addition, the potential long-term harms of treating children and adolescents to lower cholesterol are not yet understood. Therefore, the Task Force is calling for more research on this topic.

“In the absence of evidence, healthcare professionals should use their judgment when deciding whether to screen patients,” says Task Force member Katrina Donahue, M.D., M.P.H. “Importantly, the Task Force does recommend other evidence-based ways to promote good heart health in young patients, including screening for obesity and interventions to prevent tobacco use.”

The Task Force’s final recommendation statement and corresponding evidence summary have been published online in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, as well as on the Task Force website at <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org>. A draft version of the recommendation statement and evidence review were available for public comment from January 24, 2023, through February 21, 2023.

The Task Force is an independent, volunteer panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine that works to improve the health of people nationwide by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications.

Dr. Li is a family physician and the Walter M. Seward professor and the chair of family medicine at the University of Virginia (UVA) School of Medicine. He is also the director of population health at UVA Health and leader of the Cancer Prevention and Population Health program at the UVA Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Dr. Donahue is a professor and vice chair of research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Department of Family Medicine. She is a family physician and senior research fellow at the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research and the co-director of the North Carolina Network Consortium, a meta-network of six practice-based research networks and four academic institutions in North Carolina.

Contact: USPSTF Media Coordinator at Newsroom@USPSTF.net / (301) 951-9203