

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommends Against Screening for Ovarian Cancer

For women without signs or symptoms, the harms of screening outweigh the benefits

WASHINGTON, D.C. – February 13, 2018 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation statement and evidence summary on screening for ovarian cancer. Based on its review of the evidence, the Task Force recommends against screening for ovarian cancer in women who do not have any signs or symptoms of the disease. **This is a D recommendation.**

Grade in this recommendation:

D: Not recommended.

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Ovarian cancer is hard to detect, and many women do not show signs or symptoms in the early stages. Further, the symptoms of ovarian cancer are often vague and similar to those of many other health issues—or may even be present in healthy women—which makes it even harder to identify ovarian cancer early. As a result, ovarian cancer is often diagnosed at a late stage, when it is harder to treat successfully. Unfortunately, current screening tests do not accurately identify if a woman has, or does not have, ovarian cancer. Therefore, screening may lead to a woman having unnecessary surgery to remove one or both ovaries when she does not have ovarian cancer.

“The Task Force recommends against screening for ovarian cancer in women who have no signs or symptoms,” says Task Force member Michael J. Barry, M.D. “Evidence shows that current screening methods do not prevent women from dying of ovarian cancer and that screening can lead to unnecessary surgery in women without cancer”.

Currently, no major U.S. medical or public health organization recommends screening for ovarian cancer. However, it’s important to note that this recommendation does not apply to women who are at high risk for ovarian cancer, such as women with a BRCA gene mutation that is associated with hereditary breast and ovarian cancer syndrome.

“Ovarian cancer is a devastating disease, and we do not have a good way to identify women with ovarian cancer early enough to treat it effectively,” says Task Force Member Chien-Wen Tseng, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.E.E. “The Task Force is calling for research to find better screening tests and treatments that can help reduce the number of women who die from ovarian cancer.”

This final recommendation is consistent with the Task Force’s 2012 final and 2017 draft recommendation statements.

This recommendation statement has been published online in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, as well as on the Task Force Web site at: <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org>. A draft version of the recommendation statement was available for public comment from July 18 to August 14, 2017.

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

Dr. Barry is director of the Informed Medical Decisions Program in the Health Decision Sciences Center at Massachusetts General Hospital. He is also a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and a physician at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Dr. Tseng is the Hawaii Medical Service Association endowed chair in health services and quality research, an associate professor, and the associate research director in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine. She is also a physician investigator with the nonprofit Pacific Health Research and Education Institute.

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