

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Draft Recommendation on Interventions to Prevent Tobacco Use Among Children and Adolescents

WASHINGTON, D.C. – December 11, 2012 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today posted a draft recommendation statement on interventions to prevent tobacco use among children and adolescents. The Task Force is providing an opportunity for public comment on this draft recommendation until January 7. All public comments will be considered as the Task Force develops its final recommendation.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. Each day, more than 3,800 youth ages 12 to 17 years smoke their first cigarette, and 1,000 children under age 18 become daily smokers. Tobacco use not only increases the risk of early death, but also can lead to tobacco-related illnesses such as cancers, cardiovascular diseases, and respiratory conditions.

“As a pediatrician, I believe preventing tobacco use is critical in helping young people to live long, healthy lives,” said Task Force member David Grossman, M.D., M.P.H. “The good news is that primary care clinicians can play an important role in preventing tobacco use among their young patients.”

Evidence shows that education and brief counseling in primary care settings can prevent children and teens from starting to smoke. Effective interventions include:

- Private or group/family face-to-face interactions with a health care professional
- Telephone counseling with a clinician
- Print materials, such as activity guides, newsletters, tip sheets, workbooks, and preprinted prescription forms with anti-tobacco messages
- Educational videos

“Many of these interventions are brief, low-cost, and easy to implement in primary care, with potentially lifesaving results for these teens,” Dr. Grossman said.

Based on strong evidence, the Task Force also currently recommends that clinicians screen all adults and pregnant women for tobacco use and provide services to help them quit smoking.

The Task Force’s draft recommendation has been posted for public comment on the Task Force Web site at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org. Comments can be submitted from December 11 to January 7 at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/tfcomment.htm.

The Task Force is an independent group of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine who 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.

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