

## U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Final Recommendation Statement on Primary Care Interventions to Prevent Tobacco Use in Children and Adolescents

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Aug. 26, 2013 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today released its final recommendation statement on primary care interventions to prevent tobacco use in children and adolescents. The Task Force recommends that primary care clinicians provide interventions, including education or brief counseling, to prevent their school-aged and adolescent patients from using tobacco.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. Each day, more than 3,800 children between the ages of 12 and 17 years smoke their first cigarette, and 1,000 children under the age of 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 that preventing tobacco use is critical in helping young people live long, healthy lives,” says Task Force member David Grossman, M.D., M.P.H. “The good news is that we have solid evidence primary care clinicians can help their young patients be tobacco free. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

Evidence shows that a variety of behavioral counseling interventions can reduce the risk that school-aged children and adolescents will start smoking cigarettes. Education and counseling about the dangers of smoking and the importance of never using tobacco can be done in a variety of ways:

- Conversations with a health care professional in the office or by phone, either individually with a youth or in a family or group session
- Educational videos and print materials, such as activity guides, newsletters, workbooks, and preprinted prescription forms with anti-tobacco messages

“Many of these interventions are simple, low-cost, and can be implemented in primary care,” says Task Force member Susan Curry, Ph.D. “Even very minimal educational and counseling interventions, such as mailing materials to a child’s home, can help to keep children and teens from starting to smoke.”

The Task Force’s final recommendation statement is published online in *Pediatrics* and the *Annals of Internal Medicine* and is available on the Task Force Web site at [www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org](http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org). A fact sheet that explains the recommendation statement in plain language is also available. Before finalizing this recommendation, the USPSTF posted a draft version for public comment in December 2012.

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.

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