

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Final Recommendation Statement on Screening for Hearing Loss in Older Adults

More research is needed on whether or not to screen older adults for hearing loss before they have symptoms

WASHINGTON, D.C. – March 23, 2021 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation statement on screening for hearing loss in older adults. The Task Force determined that there is not enough evidence to make a recommendation for or against screening for hearing loss in adults age 50 and older without signs or symptoms of hearing loss. **This is an I statement.**

Grade in this recommendation:

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

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Hearing loss is a common health problem among older adults. In the United States, more than 40 percent of people age 70 years or older and almost 20 percent of people age 40 to 69 report hearing loss. Many people notice hearing loss as they get older, which can negatively affect their quality of life and ability to function independently. This recommendation is for people who have not noticed problems with their hearing. The I statement is a call for more research, not a recommendation for or against screening for hearing loss.

“More research is needed to determine if there are benefits or harms of screening for hearing loss in people who have not reported problems with their hearing,” says Task Force member Chien-Wen Tseng, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.E.E. “We also need more trials in the general adult population to demonstrate how screening all older adults may impact quality of life.”

There are several commonly used screening tests to check for hearing loss. However, there is limited evidence that screening improves health outcomes such as hearing-related function and quality of life for those who have not shown signs of hearing loss.

“Given the insufficient evidence, clinicians should use their judgement to determine whether or not to screen older adult patients for hearing loss,” says Dr. Tseng. “Importantly, if a person has concerns about their hearing, they should talk to their healthcare provider to get the care they need.”

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 <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org>. A draft version of the recommendation statement and evidence review were available for public comment from September 8, 2020, to October 5, 2020.

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. Tseng is the Hawaii Medical Service Association endowed chair in health services and quality research, a professor, and the 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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