

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

Task Force determines that more research is needed to make a recommendation for or against screening for hearing loss in adults age 50 or older before they recognize symptoms

WASHINGTON, D.C. – September 8, 2020 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today posted a draft 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 70 years or older and almost 20 percent of people aged 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 I statement focuses on people who haven't noticed problems with their hearing.

"Increasing age is the most important risk factor for hearing loss," says Task Force member Chien-Wen Tseng, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.E.E. "Although we found that screening tests can detect hearing loss, we don't have clear evidence about whether or not it's helpful to identify hearing loss in people who have not reported hearing issues."

If someone is concerned about their hearing, they should talk to their clinician to get the care they need.

"We need more research to fully evaluate the benefits and harms of screening for hearing loss in people who don't have any concerns about their hearing," says Task Force member John Epling, M.D., M.S.Ed. "In particular, we need more studies that include the general adult population."

The Task Force's draft recommendation statement and draft evidence review have been posted for public comment on the Task Force website at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org. Comments can be submitted from September 8, 2020, through October 5, 2020, at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/tfcomment.htm.

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, 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, an affiliate of the Veterans Affairs Pacific Islands Health Care System.

Dr. Epling is a professor and chair of family medicine at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. He is the medical director of research for family and community medicine, is the medical director of employee health and wellness for the Carilion Clinic and maintains an active clinical primary care practice.

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