

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Draft Recommendation Statement on Screening for Hepatitis B Virus Infection in Adolescents and Adults

Task Force recommends screening people at increased risk for hepatitis B infection

WASHINGTON, D.C. – May 5, 2020 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today posted a draft recommendation statement on screening for hepatitis B virus infection in adolescents and adults. Based on its review of the evidence, the Task Force recommends clinicians screen teens and adults at increased risk of hepatitis B to help prevent serious health problems. **This is a B recommendation.**

Grade in this recommendation:

B: Recommended.

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Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver and is spread through contact with the blood and body fluids of an infected person. About 860,000 people in the United States are living with hepatitis B. If left untreated, hepatitis B can lead to serious health problems, including cancer and liver failure.

Many people with hepatitis B do not show signs or symptoms and do not know they are infected. This increases the chance that they could spread it to others.

“Fortunately, screening can detect hepatitis B in people who have it but do not show any symptoms,” says Task Force member Chyke Doubeni, M.D., M.P.H. “Clinicians should screen teens and adults who are at increased risk so those with hepatitis B can be treated to help reduce the likelihood of serious health problems.”

People at the greatest risk for hepatitis B infection are often infected at birth. They include people born in regions with a high prevalence of hepatitis B, and people born in the United States who did not get vaccinated at birth and have parents from regions with a high prevalence of hepatitis B. Other people at increased risk of infection include those who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, and those who have HIV.

“Clinicians can determine whether their patients are at increased risk for hepatitis B by asking about personal circumstances and behaviors that may put them at increased risk,” says Task Force member Aaron Caughey, M.D., M.P.P., M.P.H., Ph.D. “New evidence continues to reinforce that screening in those at increased risk consistently leads to better health outcomes.”

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 May 5, 2020, to June 1, 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. Doubeni is a professor of family medicine and the inaugural director of the Mayo Clinic Center for Health Equity and Community Engagement Research, which addresses health disparities throughout

the life course and advances the ideal of health equity locally and globally through research and community engagement.

Dr. Caughey is a professor in and chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and associate dean for Women's Health Research and Policy at Oregon Health & Science University. He is also the founder and chair of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-funded Oregon Perinatal Collaborative.

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