

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

Task Force recommends that healthcare providers screen all adults for hypertension

WASHINGTON, D.C. – April 27, 2021 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation statement on screening for hypertension in adults. Based on its review of the evidence, the Task Force recommends that healthcare providers screen all adults 18 years or older for hypertension to improve the health of their patients. **This is an A recommendation.**

Grade in this recommendation:

A: Recommended.

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This final recommendation is consistent with the 2015 final recommendation on this topic.

Hypertension is when a person's blood pressure is consistently elevated in various settings. It is a very common condition, affecting almost half of adults in the United States. Hypertension often doesn't cause symptoms, but, if left untreated, can lead to heart attacks, strokes, and heart and kidney failure.

"Without screening, most people wouldn't know they have hypertension and could be at risk for a heart attack or stroke," says Task Force member John B. Wong, M.D. "Clinicians can improve their patients' health by screening all adults for hypertension."

When someone's blood pressure is high at their doctor's office, they should talk with their healthcare provider about whether to have their blood pressure re-checked in other settings. Measurements taken outside of the clinic can identify if someone only has high blood pressure readings while in the doctor's office, or if their blood pressure remains high in other settings over time. This difference helps providers know how best to care for their patients.

"Screening for high blood pressure should first be done by a clinician during an office visit using a blood pressure cuff on the upper arm," says Task Force member Michael J. Barry, M.D. "After that, if blood pressure is high, it should also be measured in settings outside of the office to confirm a diagnosis of hypertension before starting treatment."

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 www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org. A draft version of the recommendation statement and evidence review were available for public comment from June 23, 2020, to July 20, 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 people nationwide by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications.

Dr. Wong is chief scientific officer, vice chair for Clinical Affairs, chief of the Division of Clinical Decision Making, and a primary care clinician in the Department of Medicine at Tufts Medical Center. He is also director of comparative effectiveness research for the Tufts Clinical Translational Science Institute and

a professor of medicine at Tufts University School of Medicine and the Tufts University School of Graduate Biomedical Sciences.

Dr. Barry is director of the Informed Medical Decisions Program in the Health Decision Sciences Center at Massachusetts General Hospital. He is also a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and a clinician at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Contact: USPSTF Media Coordinator at Newsroom@USPSTF.net / (301) 951-9203