

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Final Recommendation Statement on Screening for High Blood Pressure in Children and Adolescents

More research is needed to make a recommendation for or against screening

WASHINGTON, D.C. – November 10, 2020 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation statement on screening for high blood pressure in children and adolescents. The Task Force determined that there is not enough evidence to make a recommendation for or against screening for high blood pressure in children and adolescents. **This is an I statement.**

Grade in this recommendation:

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

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The Task Force reviewed the evidence on screening for high blood pressure in children and teens. High blood pressure is a growing public health concern for children and teens in the United States. It can have serious negative health effects in childhood and adulthood, such as kidney disease and heart problems. Children and teens who have high blood pressure are more likely to have it as adults, and in younger children, high blood pressure can also be a sign of another underlying condition.

“Although high blood pressure is a serious health issue, there is not enough evidence on whether or not screening children and teens leads to better long-term health,” says Task Force member Michael Silverstein, M.D., M.P.H. “Clinicians should use their best judgment about whether or not to screen youth who do not have signs or symptoms.”

For this recommendation, the Task Force expanded its review of the evidence to look at the benefits and harms of screening for hypertension caused by an underlying medical condition, known as secondary hypertension, as well as the usual type of high blood pressure, which has no clear cause, known as primary hypertension. However, there is limited evidence on screening for both primary and secondary hypertension, so the Task Force continues to call for more research on this important topic.

“Children and teens who have high blood pressure are more likely to have it as adults,” says Task Force member Martha Kubik, Ph.D., R.N. “But, we need better evidence to help us understand whether lowering blood pressure in youth leads to better cardiovascular health.”

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 April 21, 2020, to May 18, 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. Silverstein is a professor of pediatrics, chief of the Division of General Academic Pediatrics, and vice chair of research for the Department of Pediatrics at the Boston University School of Medicine. He

is also associate chief medical officer for research and population health at Boston Medical Center/Boston University School of Medicine.

Dr. Kubik is a professor and director of the School of Nursing, College of Health and Human Services at George Mason University. Dr. Kubik is a nurse scientist, active researcher, and past standing member on the National Institutes of Health's Community-Level Health Promotion Study Section. Dr. Kubik is an advanced practice nurse and fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.

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