

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Final Recommendation Statement on Interventions for Tobacco Cessation in Adults

Task Force recommends clinicians ask about tobacco use and connect people to proven, safe methods to help them quit

WASHINGTON, D.C. – January 19, 2021 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation statement on interventions for tobacco cessation in adults, including pregnant people. Based on its review of the evidence, the Task Force recommends that primary care clinicians ask all adults and pregnant people about their tobacco use, advise those who use tobacco to quit, and connect them to proven, safe methods to help them quit.

These are A recommendations. The Task Force found that the evidence is unclear whether e-cigarettes help adults quit smoking. More research is needed on the benefits and harms of using medications to help pregnant people quit. **These are I statements.**

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States. Smoking is the most common form of tobacco use in adults and leads to nearly half a million deaths in the United States each year. For those who are pregnant, smoking can cause serious harms to both the pregnant person and baby.

The Task Force found that a variety of counseling methods are effective in helping adults, including pregnant people, quit using tobacco. These include individual and group counseling and phone counseling. In addition, for adults who are not pregnant, there are FDA-approved medications for quitting tobacco—known as pharmacotherapy—that are also effective, either alone or in combination with counseling. Examples of medications include over-the-counter nicotine patches and gum, as well as prescription medications.

The optimal method to help a patient quit can vary based on each patient’s medical history, preferences, and smoking behavior. Clinicians should talk with their patients to find out which approach is best for them.

“Quitting is the most important step a smoker can take to lead a longer and healthier life,” says Task Force member Michael Silverstein, M.D., M.P.H. “The good news is there are multiple safe and proven ways to help adults quit tobacco, including counseling, medications, or a combination of both.”

Because the evidence is unclear on whether e-cigarettes help adults quit smoking, and there are other proven safe methods available, clinicians should offer adults who smoke these other methods rather than e-cigarettes.

Although FDA-approved medications can effectively help adults who are not pregnant quit, the evidence is not clear on the benefits and harms of using these medications during pregnancy. The Task Force is calling for more research in this area.

Grades in this recommendation:

- A:** Recommended.
- I:** The balance of benefits and harms cannot be determined.

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“We know that behavioral counseling helps pregnant people quit tobacco use and leads to healthier pregnancies,” says Task Force member Chien-Wen Tseng, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.E.E. “However, we need more research to know whether medicines to help quit tobacco are a safe option during pregnancy.”

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 2, 2020, to June 29, 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. Tseng is the Hawaii Medical Service Association endowed chair in health services and quality research, a 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.

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