

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Final Recommendation Statement on Primary Care Interventions for Prevention and Cessation of Tobacco Use in Children and Adolescents

Interventions can help prevent tobacco use; more research needed on how to help youth quit

WASHINGTON, D.C. – April 28, 2020 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation statement on primary care interventions for prevention and cessation of tobacco use in children and adolescents. Based on its review of the evidence, the Task Force recommends that primary care clinicians provide interventions, including education or brief counseling, to prevent school-aged children and adolescents from starting to use tobacco. **This is a B recommendation.** More research is needed on how clinicians can help youth who use tobacco to quit. **This is an I statement.**

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. This problem almost always begins before adulthood; nearly 90 percent of smokers try their first cigarette before they are 18 years old.

“All youth are at risk for tobacco use, and prevention is critical to keeping our young people healthy,” says Task Force member Michael Silverstein, M.D., M.P.H. “The good news is that clinicians can help keep children and teens from starting to use tobacco by providing education or brief counseling.”

Tobacco use among children continues to be a major issue in the United States, driven largely by an increase in e-cigarette use. More than 1 million high school students used cigarettes in 2019, and more than 5 million—or 1 in 5 high school students—used e-cigarettes in that same year. This recommendation addresses both the use of smoking combustible products (including cigarettes, cigars, cigarillos, and little cigars) and the use of e-cigarettes or vaping. Eliminating the use of any tobacco product in youth is essential.

The Task Force also looked at the evidence on interventions to help children and teens who are already using tobacco to quit. It found critical gaps in the evidence on how clinicians can help youth quit using tobacco.

“Tobacco use in children and teens is now on the rise, driven largely by vaping,” says Task Force member Chien-Wen Tseng, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.E.E. “The Task Force examined how clinicians can help youth quit tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, but unfortunately there is not enough evidence in this area, so we are calling for more research.”

Until more research is available, clinicians should use their judgment about how to best help each individual child and teen quit.

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 June 25, 2019 to July 22, 2019.

Grades in this recommendation:

B: Recommended.

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

[Learn more here](#)

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.

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