

# USPSTF: Evidence lacking for prevention of child maltreatment

November 28 2018

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(HealthDay)—The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF)

concludes that the evidence on the benefits and harms of primary care interventions for preventing child maltreatment is currently inadequate. These findings form the basis of a final recommendation statement published online Nov. 27 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Meera Viswanathan, Ph.D., from RTI International in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, and colleagues conducted a [systematic review](#) to update evidence on interventions provided in or referable from [primary care](#) to prevent child maltreatment. Data from 22 trials with 11,132 participants were included.

The researchers identified limited and inconsistent evidence on the benefits of primary care interventions, including home visitation programs to prevent child maltreatment. Interventions were not significantly associated with reports to Child Protective Services or removal of the child from the home. There was no evidence relating to harms of these interventions. Based on these findings, the USPSTF concludes there is currently insufficient evidence to weigh the benefits and harms of primary care interventions to prevent child maltreatment (I statement).

"Child maltreatment is a serious problem, and no child should suffer from abuse or neglect," Task Force member Alex R. Kemper, M.D., M.P.H., said in a statement. "Unfortunately, we still do not have the evidence we need about what primary care clinicians can do to help prevent [child maltreatment](#) before it happens."

**More information:** [Final Recommendation Statement](#)  
[Evidence Report](#)  
[Editorial \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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