

# USPSTF recommends screening adults for unhealthy alcohol use

November 14 2018

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

recommends that primary care clinicians screen all adults, including pregnant women, for unhealthy alcohol use and provide brief behavioral counseling to reduce unhealthy alcohol use. These findings form the basis of a final recommendation statement published in the Nov. 13 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Elizabeth A. O'Connor, Ph.D., from Kaiser Permanente in Portland, Oregon, and colleagues reviewed the literature to examine the effectiveness and harms of [screening](#) and [counseling](#) for unhealthy alcohol use to inform the USPSTF. Data were reviewed from 113 studies with 314,466 people.

The researchers found that among adults, screening instruments can effectively identify people with unhealthy alcohol use; counseling interventions for those who screen positive, including pregnant women, are linked to reductions in alcohol use. For adolescents, results were mixed for the effects of interventions to reduce unhealthy alcohol use. Based on these findings, the USPSTF recommends screening and brief behavioral counseling interventions for alcohol use in adults (B recommendation). For adolescents (aged 12 to 17 years), the evidence available was insufficient to assess the balance of benefits and harms of screening and brief behavioral counseling interventions for unhealthy [alcohol](#) use (I statement).

"We continue to call for more research and encourage primary care clinicians to use their judgment when deciding whether to screen adolescents," task force chair Sue Curry, Ph.D., said in a statement.

**More information:** [Final Recommendation Statement](#)  
[Evidence Report](#)  
[Editorial 1](#)  
[Editorial 2](#)  
[Editorial 3 \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

[Editorial 4 \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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