

# Little evidence interventions prevent illicit drug use in youth

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The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) concludes that

current evidence is inadequate for assessing the balance of benefits and harms of primary care interventions for preventing illicit drug use among children, adolescents, and young adults. These findings form the basis of a final recommendation statement published in the May 26 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Elizabeth O'Connor, Ph.D., from the Kaiser Permanente Evidence-Based Practice Center in Portland, Oregon, and colleagues reviewed the benefits and harms of behavioral counseling interventions to prevent illicit and nonmedical drug use in children, adolescents, and young adults. Twenty-nine [trials](#), with 18,353 participants, met inclusion criteria. The researchers found that 19 trials reported on health, social, or legal outcomes; most showed no group differences. The effects on illicit drug use in 26 trials involving 17,811 nonpregnant youth were highly variable; in pooled results, there was no clinically important or statistically significant association seen with illicit drug use.

Based on the limited and inadequate evidence, the USPSTF concluded that the benefits and harms of primary care-based interventions were uncertain for preventing [illicit drug use](#) in children, adolescents, and young adults. The evidence is currently inadequate for assessing the balance of benefits and harms, and more research is needed (I statement).

"Unfortunately, the Task Force still cannot make a recommendation due to gaps in evidence, so we are renewing our call for more research," USPSTF member Michal Silverstein, M.D., M.P.H., said in a statement.

**More information:** [Evidence Report](#)  
[Final Recommendation Statement](#)

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