

# US Preventive Services Task Force recommends syphilis screening for at-risk persons

September 27 2022

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The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends syphilis screening for asymptomatic, nonpregnant adolescents and adults who have ever been sexually active and are at increased risk for infection. This recommendation forms the basis of a final recommendation statement published in the Sept. 27 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Michelle L. Henninger, Ph.D., from the Kaiser Permanente Evidence-based Practice Center in Portland, Oregon, and colleagues conducted a reaffirmation evidence review to inform the USPSTF for an updated recommendation statement, focusing on new evidence since the 2016 recommendation. Forty full-text articles were screened.

The researchers found that increases in the proportion of men who have sex with men (MSM) tested annually and the mean number of tests of MSM performed annually are associated with an increase in the proportion of early latent infections identified and in the proportion of secondary infections identified (17 to 22 percent and 5 to 19 percent increases, respectively). No studies examined the performance of risk assessment or directly assessed the harms of [screening](#) for syphilis.

Based on these findings, the USPSTF concludes with high certainty that for nonpregnant persons at increased risk for infection, there is a substantial net benefit for screening for syphilis infection (A [recommendation](#)).

"It is vital that people who are at increased risk for syphilis get screened so the [infection](#) can be treated before problems develop or worsen," USPSTF member Katrina Donahue, M.D., M.P.H., said in a statement. "In the face of rising rates of syphilis, primary care professionals have an important role in helping to keep their patients healthy."

**More information:** [Evidence Report](#)

[Final Recommendation Statement](#)

[Editorial 1](#)

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