



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

JAN 28 2015

The Honorable Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Sablan:

Thank you for your timely letter about diabetes prevention and your recognition of the work of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in this area. Changing the trajectory of diabetes in America is one of the most important and challenging things we can do to improve the health of our country.

As you note, screening is an important part of prevention. Congress authorized the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) as an independent panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine. The Task Force works to improve the health of all Americans by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services. As you know, the Affordable Care Act requires non-grandfathered private plans, some Medicaid plans, and Medicare to cover without cost-sharing recommendations that the Task Force gives an 'A' or 'B' rating.

The Task Force is currently updating its recommendation on screening for diabetes. On October 7, the Task Force posted a draft evidence review and draft recommendation statement for public comment due November 3. New evidence demonstrated that diabetes may be prevented or delayed in people who are at very high risk of developing the disease due to changes in how their bodies process glucose. On the basis of this new evidence, the Task Force proposed screening for abnormal blood glucose and type 2 diabetes mellitus in adults who are at increased risk for diabetes as a B grade recommendation.

This proposed, updated recommendation defines people who may be at risk for abnormal blood sugar or diabetes as including people with any one of the following risk factors: age 45 or older; overweight or obese; having a first-degree relative (parent, sibling, or child) with diabetes; or women with a history of gestational diabetes or who have polycystic ovarian syndrome. In addition, certain racial and ethnic minorities are at increased risk, including African Americans, Alaskan Natives, American Indians, Asian Americans, and Hispanics/Latinos. Based on this new evidence, the Task Force has proposed greatly expanding screening when compared to its prior recommendation. Attached, please find a consumer fact sheet developed by the Task Force that explains more about its draft recommendation. Additional information on the Task Force's progress can be found on the Task Force website at:

<http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/Page/Document/UpdateSummaryDraft/screening-for-abnormal-glucose-and-type-2-diabetes-mellitus>



Again, thank you for your letter. I appreciate your dedication to preventive services, preventing and treating type 2 diabetes and improving the health of all Americans. I will also provide a copy of this response to the co-signers of your letter.

Sincerely


Sylvia M. Burwell

Enclosure

Understanding Task Force Draft Recommendations



This fact sheet explains the Task Force's draft recommendation statement on screening for abnormal glucose and type 2 diabetes mellitus. It also tells you how you can send comments about the draft recommendation to the Task Force. Comments may be submitted from October 7 to November 3, 2014. The Task Force welcomes your comments.

Screening for Abnormal Blood Glucose and Diabetes

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) has issued a **draft recommendation** statement on *Screening for Abnormal Glucose and Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus*.

This draft recommendation statement applies to adults who are at increased risk for abnormal blood glucose or diabetes. Here, abnormal blood glucose means blood sugar levels that are higher than they should be.

The draft recommendation statement summarizes what the Task Force learned about the potential benefits and harms of screening for high blood sugar and diabetes: Adults who are at increased risk of developing high blood sugar and type 2 diabetes should be screened with a blood sugar test.

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease that affects how the body uses glucose, a type of sugar. Glucose is an important source of energy for cells in the body. In diabetes, the body has too much sugar in the blood. Diabetes has two types:

- **Type 1 diabetes** occurs when the pancreas produces little or no insulin, a hormone that helps glucose get into cells from the blood. Type 1 diabetes is not preventable.
- **Type 2 diabetes** occurs when the body resists the effects of insulin or doesn't produce enough to maintain normal blood sugar levels. Type 2 diabetes can sometimes be prevented.

Facts about Diabetes

Diabetes is a common disease that can have serious health consequences. If it is not carefully managed, diabetes can damage the eyes, kidneys, and nerves. Diabetes also can lead to heart disease and stroke.

The number of people with this disease has been increasing for the past 15 years. In 2012, about 29 million adults had diabetes. Most people with the disease have type 2 diabetes.

Estimates from the same year show that, in addition, about 86 million adults had higher-than-normal blood sugar but their levels were not high enough to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. Without lifestyle changes, such as losing weight, eating healthier, and exercising more, people with these abnormal blood sugar levels are likely to develop type 2 diabetes.

Many factors increase a person's risk for developing high blood sugar and type 2 diabetes, including:

- Being 45 years old or older
- Being overweight or obese
- Having a parent, brother, or sister with diabetes
- Having a genetic makeup that makes one more likely to develop diabetes (genetic predisposition)
- Being African American, Hispanic, Alaskan Native, American Indian, Asian American, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- In women, having had diabetes while pregnant (gestational diabetes) or having polycystic ovarian syndrome (a condition in which the ovaries produce higher-than-normal amounts of certain hormones)

Screening for High Blood Sugar and Diabetes

Screening can be done with several types of blood tests that determine the level of sugar in a person's blood. One blood test, the A1C test, reflects a person's average blood sugar levels for the past two to three months. Another blood test determines how well a person's body processes sugar. This test is done after a person drinks a sugar solution. It also can be done after a person has fasted (not had anything to eat or drink except water) for a certain amount of time.

Potential Benefits and Harms of Screening

The goal of screening is to identify people who have high blood sugar or diabetes so that they can be treated. Treatment consists of controlling blood sugar levels through lifestyle modifications, including encouraging healthy eating and increased physical activity changes. Some people also take medications to help them control their blood sugar level.

The Task Force reviewed studies on the potential benefits and harms of screening adults at increased risk for high blood sugar and diabetes. They found that measuring blood sugar levels and treating those who have high blood sugar with intensive lifestyle change programs may reduce their chances of developing diabetes. The Task Force also found that intensive lifestyle changes can lead to fewer cases of diabetes and fewer deaths from diabetes-related causes.

The Task Force found that measuring blood sugar may cause short-term anxiety in some people. In addition, the Task Force found that recommended lifestyle changes made as a result of screening had no harms.

The Draft Recommendation on Screening for Abnormal Blood Sugar and Diabetes: What Does It Mean?

Here is the Task Force's draft recommendation on screening for high blood sugar and diabetes. The grade is based on the quality and strength of the evidence about the potential benefits and harms of the screening. It also is based on the size of the potential benefits and harms. Task Force recommendation grades are explained in the box at the end of this fact sheet.

When the Task Force recommends screening (Grade B), it is because it has more potential benefits than potential harms. The Notes explain key ideas.

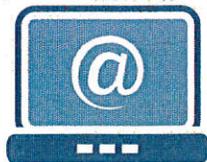
Before you send comments to the Task Force, you may want to read the full [draft recommendation statement](#). The draft recommendation statement explains the evidence the Task Force reviewed and how it decided on the grade. An [evidence document](#) provides more detail about the studies the Task Force reviewed.

1 The Task Force recommends *screening for abnormal blood glucose and diabetes* in adults at *increased risk*.
Grade B

Notes

- 1 screening**
Blood tests to determine a person's blood sugar level.
- abnormal blood glucose**
Blood sugar levels that are not normal. In this recommendation statement, abnormal blood glucose refers to levels that are higher than they should be.
- diabetes**
A disease in which blood sugar levels are too high because a person does not make enough insulin or does not use it well.
- at increased risk**
Having factors that increase the chances of developing high blood sugar or diabetes, such as being 45 or older, being overweight or obese, or having a close relative with diabetes.

 **Click Here** to Comment on the Draft Recommendation



The Task Force welcomes comments on this draft recommendation.



Comments must be received **between October 7 and November 3, 2014.**



All comments will be considered for use in writing final recommendations.

What is the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force?

The Task Force is an independent, volunteer group of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine. The Task Force works to improve the health of all Americans by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services, such as screenings, counseling services, or preventive medicines. The recommendations apply to people with no signs or symptoms of the disease being discussed.

To develop a recommendation statement, Task Force members consider the best available science and research on a topic. For each topic, the Task Force posts draft documents for public comment, including a **draft recommendation statement**. All comments are reviewed and considered in developing the final recommendation statement. To learn more, visit the [Task Force Web site](#).

Click Here to Learn More About Preventing Diabetes

-  [Diabetes \(healthfinder.gov\)](#)
-  [National Diabetes Education Program \(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services\)](#)
-  [Glucose Tolerance Test \(MedlinePlus\)](#)

USPSTF Recommendation Grades

Grade	Definition
A	Recommended.
B	Recommended.
C	Recommendation depends on the patient's situation.
D	Not recommended.
I statement	There is not enough evidence to make a recommendation.