

NEWS BRIEF

Provided by: R&R Insurance Services

Health Panel Calls for Routine Anxiety Screening for Adults

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) [recommends](#) that adults under the age of 65 get regularly screened for anxiety. The draft recommendation applies to adults 19 and older who don't have a diagnosed mental health disorder. It's meant to help primary care clinicians identify early signs of anxiety, which can go undetected for years. This is the first time the Task Force has recommended anxiety screening in adult primary care without symptoms.

The Task Force, a group of independent disease prevention and medical experts, defines anxiety disorders as "characterized by greater duration or intensity of a stress response over everyday events." Recognized types include generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder and agoraphobia.

The draft recommendation noted that the lifetime prevalence of anxiety disorders in adults in the United States is 40.4% for women and 26.4% for men. The recommendation was prioritized due to anxiety's public health influence and the country's increased focus on mental health in recent years.

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"Our hope is that by raising awareness of these issues and having recommendations for clinicians, that we'll be able to help all adults in the United States, including those who experience disparities."

- Lori Pbert, Task Force member

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The guidance stops short of recommending anxiety screening for people 65 and older since many common symptoms of aging—such as trouble sleeping, pain and fatigue—can also be symptoms of anxiety. The Task Force said there wasn't enough evidence to determine the accuracy of screening tools in older adults to distinguish between anxiety symptoms and conditions of aging.

The Task Force advised clinicians to use their judgment in discussing anxiety with older patients. It also reiterated an earlier recommendation that adults of all ages undergo routine screening for depression.

What's Next?

The proposed recommendation is not final and is in a public comment period through Oct. 17. This is an opportunity for the public to provide their input and perspectives for the Task Force to consider for its final approval.

The Task Force emphasizes that if you already show signs or symptoms of anxiety, you should be assessed and connected to care. Anxiety screening tools, including questionnaires and scales, have been developed and are available in primary care. If you have concerns about anxiety, contact your doctor.

