

USPSTF releases two new guidelines on STI counseling and screening

By ACSH Staff — September 24, 2014



According to new recommendations released by the US

Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), all sexually active young adults and adults at increased risk for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) should undergo intensive [behavioral counseling](#) ^[1] to lower the risk of becoming infected. High-risk adults include adults with more than one sexual partner, adults with an active infection, and adults who do not always use condoms.

Around 20 million new cases of STIs occur each year, and about half of those infected are individuals between the ages of 15 and 24. The USPSTV description of successful intensive counseling includes providing basic information about the transmission of STIs, providing education on condoms, and discussing strategies for communicating with sexual partners about safe sex. Intensive counseling is described as two or more hours of contact.

A [second guideline](#) ^[2] released by the USPSTF states that all sexually active women under the age of 24 and older women at high risk, including pregnant women, should be screened for chlamydia and gonorrhea. Chlamydia and gonorrhea, two of the most common STIs, often do not get diagnosed as infected individuals usually do not show symptoms. If untreated, such STIs can lead to serious complications, sometimes even cancer or death. Newborns may also experience adverse effects such as neonatal chlamydial pneumonia if pregnant mothers are left untreated. The USPSTF did not find adequate evidence to recommend for or against screening for chlamydia and gonorrhea in men.

ACSH's Ariel Savransky adds, It's also important that high school health classes incorporate lessons on STDs and safe sex practices so that adolescents know how to protect themselves. As [we've said before](#) ^[3], young people are learning about sex, whether or not it's being offered in schools. The fact is that providing accurate information to teens, especially about sexual health, has the potential to be beneficial in ensuring that if teens do choose to have sex, they are doing so safely.

ACSH's Josh Bloom says, It's also important that adolescents get the HPV vaccine as HPV is the most common STD, and the primary cause of cervical cancer.

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[1] <http://annals.org//article.aspx?articleid=1906847>

[2] <http://annals.org//article.aspx?articleid=1906843>

[3] <http://acsh.org/2013/06/boston-school-board-to-vote-on-condom-policy/>