

Task Force Issues Final Recommendation Statement on Vitamin, Mineral, and Multivitamin Supplements to Prevent Cardiovascular Disease and Cancer

Task Force recommends against vitamin E and beta-carotene; more research is needed to make a recommendation for most vitamins and minerals

WASHINGTON, D.C. – June 21, 2022 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation statement on the use of vitamin, mineral, and multivitamin supplements to prevent cardiovascular disease (CVD) and cancer. The current evidence is insufficient to determine the benefits and harms of taking most vitamin, mineral, and multivitamin supplements to prevent heart disease, stroke, and cancer. **These are I statements.** However, the Task Force did find evidence on vitamin E and beta-carotene and recommends against taking them for this purpose. **This is a D recommendation.**

Grades in this recommendation:

- D: Not recommended.
- I: The balance of benefits and harms cannot be determined.

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Vitamins and minerals are two of the main types of nutrients that your body needs to stay healthy. Many people get most of the nutrients they need through a balanced diet. People often take vitamins and mineral supplements with the goal of improving or maintaining overall health. This recommendation is focused specifically on the use of vitamins and minerals to prevent CVD and cancer, which combined account for nearly half of the deaths in the United States each year.

“We all want ways to prevent heart disease, stroke, and cancer, so the Task Force again reviewed the evidence on whether taking vitamins and minerals helps prevent these diseases,” says Task Force member John Wong, M.D. “Unfortunately, based on the existing evidence, the Task Force cannot recommend for or against the use of most vitamins and minerals and is calling for more research.”

Healthcare professionals should talk to their patients about their risk and discuss other proven and effective ways to prevent CVD and cancer, including a healthy diet, exercise, and not smoking.

While the evidence is unclear about taking most vitamin and mineral supplements to prevent heart disease, stroke, and cancer, there is evidence that taking vitamin E or beta-carotene does not reduce the risk of these diseases. The Task Force found that there is no benefit to taking vitamin E and that there are harms associated with taking beta-carotene for this purpose.

“There are two vitamins—vitamin E and beta-carotene—that the Task Force recommends against using for the prevention of cardiovascular disease and cancer,” says Task Force vice chair Michael Barry, M.D. “We found that there is no benefit to taking vitamin E and that beta-carotene can be harmful because it increases the risk of lung cancer in people already at risk.”

This recommendation applies to healthy adults who do not have a known or suspected nutritional deficiency or special nutritional needs. It does not apply to people who are or may become pregnant. The Task Force has a separate recommendation that all people who are planning or capable of becoming pregnant should take folic acid supplements.

The Task Force's final recommendation statement and corresponding evidence summary have been published online in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, as well as on the Task Force website at: <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org>. A draft version of the recommendation statement and evidence review were available for public comment from May 4, 2021, to June 1, 2021.

The Task Force is an independent, volunteer panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine that works to improve the health of people nationwide by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications.

Dr. Wong is interim chief scientific officer, vice chair for Academic Affairs, chief of the Division of Clinical Decision Making, and a primary care clinician at Tufts Medical Center. He is a professor of medicine at Tufts University School of Medicine.

Dr. Barry is the director of the Informed Medical Decisions Program in the Health Decision Sciences Center at Massachusetts General Hospital. He is also a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and a clinician at Massachusetts General Hospital.

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