For the Third Time, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Fails to Meet

Without USPSTF guidance, the future of cost-free prevention services, such as cancer screenings and PrEP to prevent HIV, is uncertain.

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Which cancer screenings, HIV prevention meds, hepatitis tests and diabetes measurements will health insurers be required to cover in the upcoming years? The answers may not be forthcoming, because the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) postponed the March meeting of the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). The USPSTF evaluates preventive health services and recommends which ought to be covered by insurers. Services range from HIV screening and medications, like pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to prevent HIV, as well as cancer screenings, such as HPV testing and Pap smears.

The USPSTF typically meets three times a year, but its last meeting was March 2025. HHS canceled the June 2025 meeting, and the November 2025 meeting failed to take place due to the government shutdown. The most recent postponement raised concerns that Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. may disband the panel as part of the "Make American Healthy Again" (MAHA) movement.

The USPSTF is "an organization established by statute for helping to make Americans healthier," Aaron Carroll, MD, president and CEO of Academy Health, told Reuters. "It's trying to prevent all the chronic diseases that MAHA seems to talk about caring about so much."

Formed in 1984, the USPSTF is an independent panel of volunteers with expertise in preventive medicine, internal medicine, family medicine, behavioral health, pediatrics, obstetrics, gynecology and nursing. According to its website, the task force "improves the health of people nationwide by making evidence-based recommendations on effective ways to prevent disease and prolong life."

Under the current guidelines of the Affordable Care Act (ACA, or Obamacare), the USPSTF grades preventive services; those that earn an A or B grade must be covered by health insurance plans. Since the establishment of the ACA in 2010, the task force has delivered an annual report to

Congress announcing its recommendation grades. A report was not issued in 2025.

"No one else has the rigorous transparency in process that the USPSTF has," Caroll told Medpage in a separate interview. "They are very clear and transparent in how they gather the evidence, how they grade the evidence, what was actually included and how they are deliberating. Other organizations may do that, but they do not do it as consistently…which is why the ACA is pegged to them and not to each individual society."

USPSTF recommendations address three types of services: screenings, behavioral counseling and preventive medications. The USPSTF recommends screening for hepatitis B and C in adults, adolescents and pregnant women. Similarly, it recommends screening, counseling and preventive medications for various cancers (breast, prostate, lung, colorectal, skin, cervical and more). For a complete list of services with an A or B grade, visit USPreventiveServicesTaskForce.org.

Current federal guidance requires insurers to cover three forms of PrEP—two are daily pills (Truvada and Descovy) and the third is Apretude, a long-acting injectable given as a shot every two months. Last summer, the Food and Drug Administration approved Yeztugo, a PrEP shot given every six months. But the USPSTF hasn't met since then.

In May 2025, the HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute asked the USPSTF to once more update its recommendations regarding PrEP.

"We urge the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) to expeditiously update its 2023 HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) recommendation to incorporate important new evidence, including clinical trial data on lenacapavir [sold under the brand name Yeztugo], a new twice-yearly PrEP formulation, and new findings on PrEP's effectiveness in women and other key populations," read the letter to Task Force members.

Reviews of various other guidelines are also up in the air. Currently, 14 topics are in the draft developing stage, while four are in the finalizing stage for USPSTF recommendation statements.

Since USPSTF's last meeting in 2025, the Food and Drug Administration approved self-collected HPV tests, a test that has yet to be addressed by the USPSTF. Meanwhile, the American Society for Clinical Pathology announced in a press release this week that it is waiting on the final outcome of USPSTF's update to cervical cancer screening guidelines.

Without USPSTF updates and recommendations, the coverage of preventive care, screening and

counseling for various life-threatening diseases and chronic illnesses is unknown.

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