

AAP urges continued autism screening in addition to more research

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A national panel is calling for more research on the impact of universal screening for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in young children.

The Academy echoed that call but still is urging pediatricians to continue screening all children at 18 and 24 months in addition to regular developmental surveillance.

The Academy recommends screening all children for autism at 18 and 24 months in addition to regular developmental surveillance. AAP News photo by Jeff Knox

“This type of screening can identify children with significant developmental and behavioral challenges early, when they may benefit most from intervention, as well as those with other developmental difficulties,” AAP President Benard P. Dreyer, M.D., FAAP, said. “For screening to be effective, by design it must be applied to all children – not only those who exhibit overt symptoms, or those an individual clinician judges would benefit.”



The [U.S. Preventive Services Task Force \(USPSTF\) recommendation](#), released Feb. 16, said there is not enough evidence to assess the benefits and harms of screening for ASD in asymptomatic children 18 to 30 months in which parents or doctors have not raised concerns. The group expressed similar sentiments in a draft recommendation in August.

“Good-quality studies are needed to better understand the intermediate and long-term health outcomes of screening for ASD among children without obvious signs and symptoms and whether earlier identification through universal screening is associated with clinically important improvements in health outcomes,” according to the study.

However, the task force stressed the finding should not be taken as a recommendation against screening.

The Academy stands by its call for universal screening, which is included in [Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents](#), said Dr. Dreyer, who added that the USPSTF recommendation should not affect insurance coverage for such screening.

Resources

- [AAP Council on Children with Disabilities autism page](#)

- [Information for parents about autism symptoms](#)
- [AAP clinical report on identifying autism](#)
- [AAP toolkit on caring for children with ASD](#)

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