Primary care physicians should ask their adult patients about their drinking habits, and counsel those whose alcohol use is risky, according to a new report.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force made their recommendation based on a review of studies.

They found there is sufficient evidence to conclude screening can accurately detect alcohol misuse, and counseling can reduce heavy drinking in adults, Reuters reports. The task force is an independent panel of experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine.

"When people misuse alcohol, there can be serious consequences for themselves, their families, and their communities," Task Force member Sue Curry, PhD, noted in a statement. "Alcohol misuse is the cause of tens of thousands of deaths per year in the United States—deaths that could have been prevented. The good news is that primary care professionals can identify adults who engage in risky or hazardous drinking and through brief counseling, help them drink more responsibly." She added, "Unfortunately, risky and hazardous drinking is also a serious problem among adolescents, but we don't know how to identify teens who may be engaging in risky or hazardous drinking, and we don't know if brief counseling is effective in helping them to stop. We recognize the critical need for more research on what primary care teams can do to help keep teens safe and sober."

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism defines risky drinking as having more than four drinks in one day or 14 drinks in one week for men, and more than three drinks daily or seven per week for women. About one-third of adults misuse alcohol in the United States, according to the article.

As a young person you are faced with many challenges. However, very few have the potential to affect your life in a more significant way than the decisions you make about alcohol and drugs. The decisions you make about alcohol and drugs will influence your health, your grades, your relationships, your job or career, or your freedom. Not to be too dramatic. . . but these are life and death decisions. Click here to learn more.