

Promoting Disease Prevention

WHY ARE PREVENTABLE DISEASES A THREAT TO OUR NATION'S HEALTH?

Preventable Diseases Are Pervasive:

- More than half of all Americans live with one or more chronic disease, like heart disease, diabetes, and stroke.²
- Seven out of 10 deaths in the U.S. are due to chronic diseases.³
- Chronic disease can exacerbate symptoms of depression, and conditions of depression can lead to chronic diseases.⁴

Prevention Efforts Could Greatly Reduce Disease Rates:

- According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the majority of chronic diseases could be prevented through lifestyle and environmental changes. For instance:
 - ▲ Reducing adult smoking rates by one percent could result in more than 30,000 fewer heart attacks, 16,000 fewer strokes, and savings of more than \$1.5 billion over five years.⁵
 - ▲ If one-tenth of Americans began a regular walking program, \$5.6 billion could be saved in the treatment of heart disease.⁶

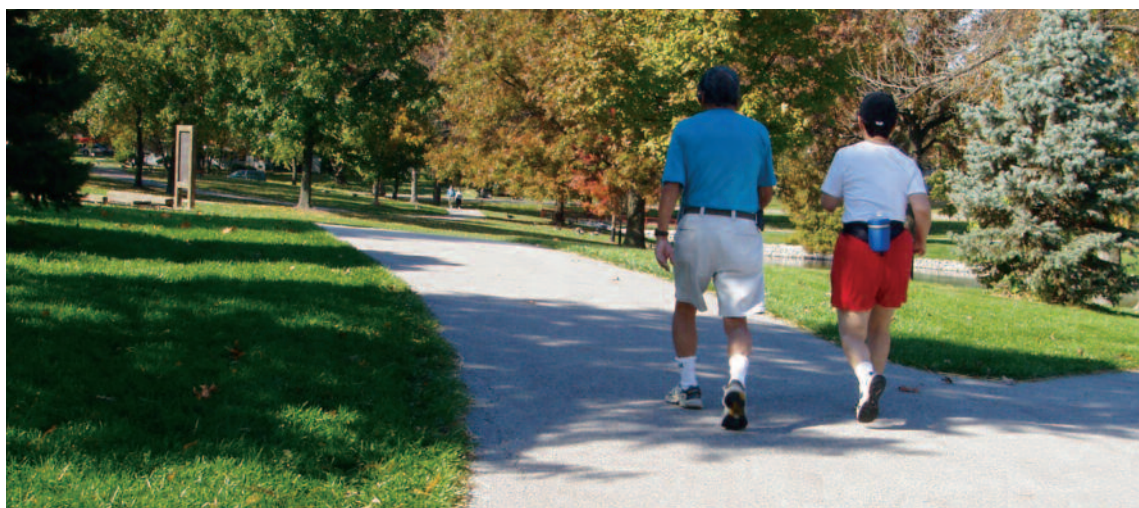
- Routine childhood vaccinations prevent more than 14 million cases of disease annually.⁷

Prevention Efforts Also Lower Health Care Spending:

- More than 75 percent of the nation's health care spending is on treating people with chronic conditions.⁸
- Of the more than \$1.7 trillion in health care spent nationally every year, less than four cents out of every dollar is spent on prevention and public health.⁹
- Between 1989 and 2004, the California Tobacco Control Program saved more than \$86 billion in smoking-caused health costs.¹⁰
- Routine childhood vaccinations result in \$50 billion saved annually in direct and indirect costs.¹¹
- Keeping the American workforce well helps American businesses remain competitive in the global economy by lowering health care costs and increasing productivity. For instance, Caterpillar's Healthy Balance Program will save \$700 million by 2015 and Motorola's Wellness Programs saves the company \$3.93 for every \$1 invested in wellness benefits.^{12, 13}

"THE U.S. HAS THE HIGHEST RATE OF PREVENTABLE DEATHS AMONG 19 INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS."¹

-- Health Affairs



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PREVENTING
EPIDEMICS.
PROTECTING
PEOPLE.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO REDUCE PREVENTABLE DISEASES?

- **Break Down Stovepipes.** Preventing illness requires policymakers and public health professionals to think across silos. Instead of preventing one disease or condition at a time, we can implement public health interventions that can help prevent multiple conditions and benefit communities. Grants to public health departments should have flexibility to allow the development of cross-cutting programs.
- **Protect the Public Health Provisions in Health Reform.** The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) included an unprecedented commitment to public health and prevention, including a mandatory funding stream for prevention, coverage of clinical preventive services, and a new national strategy on prevention. The strategy will contain recommendations to improve federal prevention, health promotion, and public health practices. As the federal government begins to implement those provisions, we must maintain the investment and the focus on prevention.
- **Increase Preventive Services and Public Education Campaigns in Communities.** Proven prevention measures, such as immunizations and cancer screenings and public information campaigns to encourage healthy eating, increased physical activity, and tobacco cessation, should be funded and carried out in communities across the nation. Now that many of these services will be covered, with no cost-sharing, public health departments and providers must ensure increased access to prevention. Special emphasis should be placed on developing culturally competent communication campaigns that use respected and

trusted messengers and appropriate channels for high-risk communities.

- **Promote Healthy Communities.** Every segment of society has a role to play in prevention, including families, health care professionals, schools, businesses, and communities. Federal, state, and local governments should take a leadership role in engaging all of these stakeholders to find ways to make communities healthier and make it easier for people to make healthy choices. The Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) grants provide an effective model for providing resources to help make healthy choices easier in communities. The Community Transformation Grants, which were part of the ACA, will provide an additional investment to help communities become healthier.
- **Use Health Impact Assessments.** To stem the rising tide of chronic disease and create safe, thriving communities, government and community leaders should consider health when planning for new policies, programs and projects in sectors that do not traditionally focus on health outcomes. Health impact assessment is an effective approach to accomplish this. Health impact assessment brings together relevant public input, available data and a range of qualitative and quantitative methods to develop practical recommendations that decision makers can use to advance well-informed public policies, programs and projects that improve people's health and avoid unintended health consequences and unexpected costs.

ENDNOTES

- 1 E. Nolte and C. Martin McKee. "Measuring the Health of Nations: Updating an Earlier Analysis." *Health Affairs*, 27, no. 1 (2008): 58-71.
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- 7 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Program in Brief: Section 317 Immunization Grant Program*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, February 2007.

- 8 Anderson G. "Chronic Conditions: Making the Case for Ongoing Care." Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University; 2004.
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- 12 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Prevention Makes Common "Cents"*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003.
- 13 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Prevention Makes Common "Cents"*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003.

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