

Federal Policy Changes to Support Increased Use of Preventive Services

The United States could lead the world in stamping out preventable disease if we commit to a range of essential policies at the national level. For example, many potential federal policies would increase Americans' use of high-value clinical preventive services, such as disease screenings, immunizations, and health behavior counseling, that are delivered by doctors and other medical professionals. Other policies would reinforce doctors' efforts and address – at a population level – the leading preventable causes of death: physical inactivity, poor nutrition, tobacco use, and alcohol misuse.

Policies to Increase Use of Clinical Preventive Services in Medicare

Give the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) authority to cover preventive services in Medicare

Extend the eligibility period and remove the deductible from the Welcome to Medicare Visit

Policy Options to Combat Physical Inactivity and Poor Nutrition

Ensure that federal purchases of food (e.g., school lunches, WIC, Food Stamps), crop subsidies, land banking, and commodity purchases all conform to current nutrition science and are used to increase Americans' intake of fruits and vegetables

Promote consistent messages about healthy eating (Dietary Guidelines, food pyramid, food labels, food standards)

Provide standards and incentives to ensure accurate point-of-choice information (e.g., more user-friendly food labels and nutrition information on menus, notices in stairwells and parking lots with information about calories that could be expended by walking further)

Earmark funds in the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bills for environmental changes that encourage physical activity

Restore the Federal Trade Commission's authority to regulate food and beverage advertising aimed at children

Provide funding for social marketing on physical activity and nutrition

Establish economic incentives aimed at making healthy eating and physical activity easier choices for all Americans, such as higher taxes on foods of low nutritional value (e.g., soft drinks, snack food, chewing gum)

Policies to Discourage Tobacco Use and Support Smokers Who Want to Quit

Offer incentives to state Medicaid programs to cover all U.S. Public Health Service-recommended and FDA-approved therapies for tobacco cessation, including both counseling and pharmacotherapy OR add comprehensive tobacco cessation services as a mandatory benefit for all Medicaid beneficiaries

Authorize CMS to cover over-the-counter drugs as well as prescription smoking cessation aids for Medicare beneficiaries in addition to the counseling that is already covered

Expand comprehensive tobacco cessation benefits coverage for all federal beneficiaries and all federally funded healthcare programs including DOD/VA, federal employees, and federally funded clinics

Require federal agencies to highlight and promote the use of covered services with providers and with beneficiaries who smoke

Authorize FDA to regulate tobacco

Increase the federal excise tax on tobacco

Policies to Discourage Excessive Alcohol Use

Increase the federal excise tax on alcohol

Incentives for increased enforcement of zero tolerance laws for young drivers