



NATIONAL  
**PREVENTION**  
COUNCIL

# National Prevention Strategy

AMERICA'S PLAN FOR BETTER HEALTH AND WELLNESS



June 2011



National Prevention, Health Promotion and Public Health Council

*For more information about the National Prevention Strategy, go to:  
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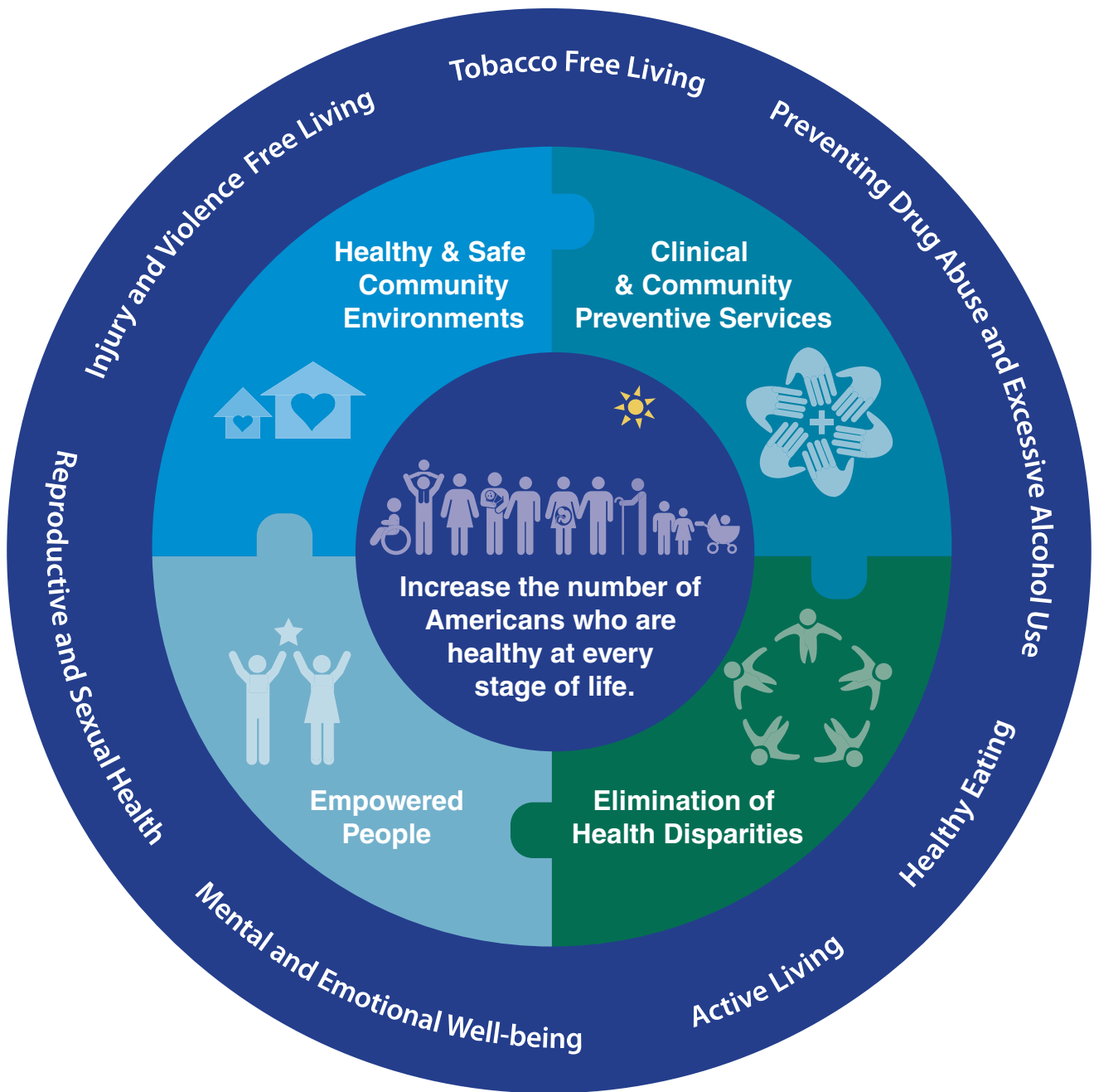
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# National Prevention Strategy

## America's Plan for Better Health and Wellness



June 16, 2011

# Message from the Chair of the National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health Council

As U.S. Surgeon General and Chair of the National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health Council (National Prevention Council), I am honored to present the nation's first ever National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy (National Prevention Strategy). This strategy is a critical component of the Affordable Care Act, and it provides an opportunity for us to become a more healthy and fit nation.

The National Prevention Council comprises 17 heads of departments, agencies, and offices across the Federal government who are committed to promoting prevention and wellness. The Council provides the leadership necessary to engage not only the Federal government but a diverse array of stakeholders, from state and local policy makers, to business leaders, to individuals, their families and communities, to champion the policies and programs needed to ensure the health of Americans prospers. With guidance from the public and the Advisory Group on Prevention, Health Promotion, and Integrative and Public Health, the National Prevention Council developed this Strategy.

The National Prevention Strategy will move us from a system of sick care to one based on wellness and prevention. It builds upon the state-of-the-art clinical services we have in this country and the remarkable progress that has been made toward understanding how to improve the health of individuals, families, and communities through prevention.

The National Prevention Strategy encourages partnerships among Federal, state, tribal, local, and territorial governments; business, industry, and other private sector partners; philanthropic organizations; community and faith-based organizations; and everyday Americans to improve health through prevention. For the first time in the history of our nation, we have developed a cross-sector, integrated national strategy that identifies priorities for improving the health of Americans. Through these partnerships, the National Prevention Strategy will improve America's health by helping to create healthy and safe communities, expand clinical and community-based preventive services, empower people to make healthy choices, and eliminate health disparities.

We know that preventing disease before it starts is critical to helping people live longer, healthier lives and keeping health care costs down. Poor diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use, and alcohol misuse are just some of the challenges we face. We also know that many of the strongest predictors of health and well-being fall outside of the health care setting. Our housing, transportation, education, workplaces, and environment are major elements that impact the physical and mental health of Americans. This is why the National Prevention Strategy helps us understand how to weave prevention into the fabric of our everyday lives.

The National Prevention Council members and I are fully committed to implementing the National Prevention Strategy. We look forward to continuing our dialogue with all stakeholders as we strive to ensure that programs and policies effectively help us accomplish our vision of a healthy and fit nation.



Regina M. Benjamin, MD  
Surgeon General  
Chair of the National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health Council

# National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health Council

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# Introduction

*The strength and ingenuity of America's people and communities have driven America's success. A healthy and fit nation is vital to that strength and is the bedrock of the productivity, innovation, and entrepreneurship essential for our future. Healthy people can enjoy their lives, go to work, contribute to their communities, learn, and support their families and friends. A healthy nation is able to educate its people, create and sustain a thriving economy, defend itself, and remain prepared for emergencies.*

The Affordable Care Act, landmark health legislation passed in 2010, created the National Prevention Council and called for the development of the National Prevention Strategy to realize the benefits of prevention for all Americans' health. The National Prevention Strategy is critical to the prevention focus of the Affordable Care Act and builds on the law's efforts to lower health care costs, improve the quality of care, and provide coverage options for the uninsured.

Preventing disease and injuries is key to improving America's health. When we invest in prevention, the benefits are broadly shared. Children grow up in communities, homes, and families that nurture their healthy development, and people are productive and healthy, both inside and outside the workplace. Businesses benefit because a healthier workforce reduces long-term health care costs and increases stability and productivity. Furthermore, communities that offer a healthy, productive, stable workforce can be more attractive places for families to live and for businesses to locate.

Although America provides some of the world's best health care and spent over \$2.5 trillion for health in 2009, the U.S. still ranks below many countries in life expectancy, infant mortality, and many other indicators of healthy life.<sup>1</sup> Most of our nation's pressing health problems can be prevented. Eating healthfully and engaging in regular physical activity, avoiding tobacco, excessive alcohol use, and other drug abuse, using seat belts, and receiving preventive services and vaccinations are just a few of the ways people can stay healthy. Health is more than merely the absence of disease; it is physical, mental, and social well-being.<sup>2</sup> Investments in prevention complement and support treatment and care. Prevention policies and programs can be cost-effective, reduce health care costs, and improve productivity (Appendix 1). The National Prevention Strategy's core value is that Americans can live longer and healthier through prevention.

Many of the strongest predictors of health and well-being fall outside of the health care setting. Social, economic, and environmental factors all influence health.<sup>3</sup> People with a quality education, stable employment, safe homes and neighborhoods, and access to high quality preventive services tend to be healthier throughout their lives and live longer. When organizations, whether they are governmental, private, or nonprofit, succeed in meeting these basic needs, people are more likely to exercise, eat healthy foods, and seek preventive health services. Meeting

basic needs and providing information about personal health and health care can empower people to make healthy choices, laying a foundation for lifelong wellness.

Preventing disease requires more than providing people with information to make healthy choices. While knowledge is critical, communities must reinforce and support health, for example, by making healthy choices easy and affordable. We will succeed in creating healthy community environments when the air and water are clean and safe; when housing is safe and affordable; when transportation and community infrastructure provide people with the opportunity to be active and safe; when schools serve children healthy food and provide quality physical education; and when businesses\* provide healthy and safe working conditions and access to comprehensive wellness programs. When all sectors (e.g., housing, transportation, labor, education, defense) promote prevention-oriented environments and policies, they all contribute to health.

The National Prevention Strategy builds on the fact that lifelong health starts at birth and continues throughout all stages of life. Prevention begins with planning and having a healthy pregnancy, develops into good eating and fitness habits in childhood, is supported by preventive services at all stages of life, and promotes the ability to remain active, independent, and involved in one's community as we age. Students who are healthy and fit come to school ready to learn; employees who are free from mental and physical conditions take fewer sick days, are more productive, and help strengthen the economy; and older adults who remain physically and mentally active are more likely to live independently.<sup>4</sup>

To ensure that all Americans share in the benefits of prevention, the National Prevention Strategy includes an important focus on those who are disproportionately burdened by poor health. In the United States, significant health disparities exist and these disparities are closely linked with social, economic, and environmental disadvantage (e.g., lack of access to quality affordable health care, healthy food, safe opportunities for physical activity, and educational and employment opportunities).

\* Consistent with existing laws

## The National Prevention Strategy

The National Prevention Strategy aims to guide our nation in the most effective and achievable means for improving health and well-being. The Strategy prioritizes prevention by integrating recommendations and actions across multiple settings to improve health and save lives.

*The National Prevention Strategy's vision is Working together to improve the health and quality of life for individuals, families, and communities by moving the nation from a focus on sickness and disease to one based on prevention and wellness.*

This Strategy envisions a prevention-oriented society where all sectors recognize the value of health for individuals, families, and society and work together to achieve better health for all Americans.

*The National Prevention Strategy's overarching goal is Increase the number of Americans who are healthy at every stage of life.*

This Strategy focuses on both increasing the length of people's lives and ensuring that people's lives are healthy and productive. Currently Americans can expect to live 78 years, but only 69 of these years would be spent in good health.<sup>5</sup> Implementing the National Prevention Strategy can increase both the length and quality of life. To monitor progress on this goal, the Council will track and report measures of the length and quality of life at key life stages (Appendix 2 for baselines and targets). To realize this vision and achieve this goal, the Strategy identifies four Strategic Directions and seven targeted Priorities. The Strategic Directions provide a strong foundation for all of our nation's prevention efforts and include core recommendations necessary to build a prevention-oriented society. The Strategic Directions are:

- **Healthy and Safe Community Environments:** Create, sustain, and recognize communities that promote health and wellness through prevention.
- **Clinical and Community Preventive Services:** Ensure that prevention-focused health care and community prevention efforts are available, integrated, and mutually reinforcing.
- **Empowered People:** Support people in making healthy choices.
- **Elimination of Health Disparities:** Eliminate disparities, improving the quality of life for all Americans.

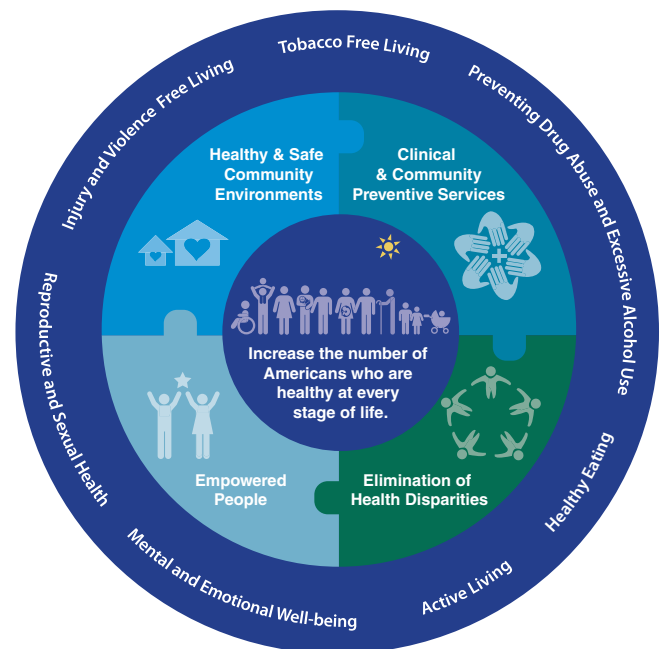
Within this Strategy, the Priorities provide evidence-based recommendations that are most likely to reduce the burden of the

leading causes of preventable death and major illness. The seven Priorities are:

- **Tobacco Free Living**
- **Preventing Drug Abuse and Excessive Alcohol Use**
- **Healthy Eating**
- **Active Living**
- **Injury and Violence Free Living**
- **Reproductive and Sexual Health**
- **Mental and Emotional Well-Being**

## Moving Forward

National leadership is critical to implementing this Strategy. This leadership includes aligning and focusing Federal prevention efforts. However, the Federal government will not be successful acting alone. Partners in prevention from all sectors in American society are needed for the Strategy to succeed. All of us must act together, implementing the Strategic Directions and Priorities, so that all Americans can live longer and healthier at every stage of life.





# National Leadership

*National leadership is critical to support our nation's focus on prevention, catalyze action across society, and implement the Strategic Directions and Priorities of the National Prevention Strategy. The National Prevention Council, created through the Affordable Care Act, comprises 17 Federal departments, agencies and offices and is chaired by the Surgeon General. The National Prevention Council developed the Strategy with input from the Prevention Advisory Group, stakeholders, and the public (Appendix 3). The Council will continue to provide national leadership, engage a diverse array of stakeholders, facilitate coordination and alignment among Federal departments, agencies, and offices and non-Federal partners, champion the implementation of effective policies and programs, and ensure accountability.*

## **Provide National Leadership**

The National Prevention Council provides coordination and leadership at the Federal level and identifies ways that agencies can work individually, as well as together, to improve our nation's health. The Council helps each agency incorporate health considerations into decision making, enhances collaboration on implementing prevention and health promotion initiatives, facilitates sharing of best practices, and, as appropriate, coordinates guidance and funding streams. The Council will identify specific, measurable actions and timelines to carry out the Strategy, and will determine accountability for meeting those timelines within and across Federal departments and agencies.

## **Engage Partners**

The Council will ensure ongoing engagement of partners from all parts of society to understand and act upon advancements and developments that may affect health and wellness through prevention. Partners are necessary to implement the Strategy at the national, state, tribal, local, and territorial levels. The Council will foster partnerships, identify areas for enhanced coordination and alignment, and disseminate best practices.

## **Align Policies and Programs**

Aligning policies and programs at the national, state, tribal, local, and territorial levels can help ensure that actions are synergistic and complementary. When all sectors are working toward common prevention priorities, improvements in health can be amplified. The National Prevention Council will work to identify and facilitate the sharing of best practices to support the alignment of actions with what has been shown to be effective.

## **Assess New and Emerging Trends and Evidence**

The prevention landscape continuously evolves as scientific evidence, new plans and reports, new legislation, and innovative partnerships emerge. The Strategy will adapt its approaches as new information becomes available. The National Prevention Council will gather input to identify promising practices and innovative approaches to prevention and integrative health. The Council will maintain close ties to prevention practice and research, updating

policy and program recommendations as new evidence becomes available. The Council will review new and emerging data and evidence, prioritizing our nation's health needs and providing information to the President and Congress concerning the most pressing health issues confronting the United States.

## **Ensure Accountability – Annual Status Report**

The National Prevention Council will track progress in implementing the National Prevention Strategy, report on successes and challenges, and identify actions that are working, as well as areas where additional effort is needed. The Strategy contains metrics that will be used to measure progress. Key indicators are identified for the overarching goal, the leading causes of death, and each of the Strategic Directions and Priorities. Each year, the National Prevention Council will deliver an Annual Status Report to the President and Congress.

## **The Prevention Advisory Group**

The Advisory Group on Prevention, Health Promotion, and Integrative and Public Health (Prevention Advisory Group), also created by the Affordable Care Act, brings a non-Federal perspective to the Strategy's policy and program recommendations and to its implementation. The Presidentially appointed Prevention Advisory Group (Appendix 4) will assist in the implementation of the Strategy, working with partners throughout the nation. The Prevention Advisory Group will advise the National Prevention Council in developing public, private, and nonprofit partnerships that will leverage opportunities to improve our nation's health. The Prevention Advisory Group will also continue to develop and suggest policy and program recommendations to the Council.

# Partners in Prevention

*Aligning and coordinating prevention efforts across a wide range of partners is central to the success of the National Prevention Strategy. Engaging partners across disciplines, sectors, and institutions can change the way communities conceptualize and solve problems, enhance implementation of innovative strategies, and improve individual and community well-being.*

## Who are the Partners in Prevention?

The Federal government alone cannot create healthier communities. State, tribal, local, and territorial governments, businesses, health care, education, and community and faith-based organizations are all essential partners in this effort.

## Roles that Partners Play

A wide range of actions contribute to and support prevention, ranging, for example, from a small business that supports evidence-based workplace wellness efforts, to a community-based organization that provides job training for the unemployed, to the parent of young children who works to provide healthy foods and ensure they receive appropriate preventive services. Partners play a variety of roles and, at their best, are trusted members of the communities and populations they serve. Opportunities for prevention increase when those working in housing, transportation, education, and other sectors incorporate health and wellness into their decision making. The following roles exemplify opportunities that partners can take to support prevention:

### Policy Maker

Individuals, organizations, and communities have a role in developing, implementing, and enforcing policies, laws, and regulations within their jurisdictions, whether they are states, cities, communities, work sites, schools, or recreation areas. Organizations can explicitly consider the potential health impact of policy options and choose to implement those policies that improve health. For example, a metropolitan planning organization can institutionalize the use of health criteria when making planning decisions on land use and design to provide opportunities for safe physical activity.

### Purchaser

Individuals, agencies, and organizations purchase various goods and services, such as food, vehicles, health insurance, and supplies, and some finance the construction of infrastructure projects, such as buildings, housing, and roads. They can use their purchasing power to promote health and wellness. For example, businesses can adopt policies to procure healthy foods and build healthier environments for their workers and customers.

### Employer

Employers have the ability to implement policies and programs that foster health, wellness, and safety among their employees. Evidence-based work-site employee wellness and safety policies and programs can reduce health risks and improve the quality of life for millions of workers in the United States. For example, employers can provide tailored, confidential counseling to promote life skills, combat depression, address substance use problems, and enhance overall emotional well-being for employees.

### Funder

Funding for research, programs, operations, and infrastructure (e.g., roads) can be used to improve prevention. Organizations that provide financial support can encourage funding recipients to adhere to health principles and standards, leverage cross-sector collaboration, and support development of healthy communities. For example, state, tribal, local, and territorial governments can incorporate recommendations for physical activity and standards for healthy eating into performance standards for schools and child care centers.

### Data Collector and Researcher

Data and research can be used to strengthen implementation of the National Prevention Strategy. For example, a university can help demonstrate the business case for prevention and share these findings with corporate decision makers (e.g., board chairs, corporate officers). Further, researchers can work with communities by providing data that present a comprehensive community profile (e.g., community health status and data on transportation, recreation, labor, environment, and education), helping identify evidence-based strategies, and measuring progress.

### Building a Prevention Foundation through Partnerships

Improving the health of our nation's workforce is good for both employees and employers – it improves employee productivity, reduces health care expenditures, and encourages economic growth. Employers can implement policies and programs to improve the health of their workers, for example, by protecting their workers from illness and injury, ensuring access to healthy foods, and providing health coverage for clinical preventive services.

# Partners in Prevention

## Health Care Provider

Individuals and organizations that deliver health care services can implement policies and systems to support the delivery of high-impact clinical preventive services and enhance linkages between clinical and community prevention efforts. For example, a health care system can adopt a decision support system that prompts clinicians to deliver appropriate clinical preventive services to patients.

## Communicator and Educator

Individuals and communities provide and receive information through many sources. Advertising, educational campaigns, informational websites, and trainings can raise awareness, provide people with knowledge and skills, and create supportive environments to help people make healthy decisions.

### PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Incorporating Health in Regional Transportation Planning: Nashville, Tennessee

Recognizing the relationship between the built environment, transportation, and health, the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization adopted a set of guiding principles, goals, and objectives to help the region pursue quality growth as a central part of its 25-year regional transportation plan. Emphasizing mass transit, active transportation (e.g., biking, walking), and preservation and enhancement of roadways, the plan incorporates health considerations into infrastructure project selection. Sixty percent of the selection criteria are related to health, safety, congestion reduction, and active transportation, which has resulted in the inclusion of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, or shared-use lanes in 70 percent of funded roadway projects (up from 2 percent). The plan also reserves a minimum of 25 percent of Federal Surface Transportation Project dollars for active transportation.



# Strategic Directions and Priorities

*We know a great deal about how to improve the health of the nation; decades of research and practice have built the evidence base and identified effective prevention approaches. Improving socioeconomic factors (e.g., poverty, education) and providing healthful environments (e.g., ensuring clean water, air and safe food, designing communities to promote increased physical activity) reinforce prevention across broad segments of society. Broad-based changes that benefit everyone in a community should be supplemented by clinical services that meet individual health needs (e.g., immunization, colonoscopy, tobacco cessation counseling, blood pressure and cholesterol monitoring and control). Through health promotion, education, and counseling, we can provide people with the knowledge, tools, and options they need to make healthy choices.*

## Strategic Directions

The National Prevention Strategy identifies four Strategic Directions. These Strategic Directions are the foundation for all prevention efforts and form the basis for a prevention-oriented society. Each Strategic Direction can stand alone and can guide actions that will demonstrably improve health. Together, the Strategic Directions create the web needed to fully support Americans in leading longer and healthier lives.

**Healthy and Safe Community Environments:** *Create, sustain, and recognize communities that promote health and wellness through prevention.* Many elements of our communities affect health directly and also influence individuals' health-related choices. A healthy community environment can help make healthy choices easy and affordable. Many factors influence individual choices, including the availability of resources to meet daily needs (e.g., educational and job opportunities, safe and affordable housing, healthy and affordable foods); community structures (e.g., accessible and safe buildings, parks, transportation); and the natural environment (e.g., absence of toxic substances and other physical hazards). Federal, state, tribal, local, and territorial policies that improve these factors within communities are often interrelated.

**Clinical and Community Preventive Services:** *Ensure that prevention-focused health care and community prevention efforts are available, integrated, and mutually reinforcing.* The provision of evidence-based clinical and community preventive services and the integration of these activities are central to improving and enhancing physical and mental health. Certain clinical preventive services have proven to be both effective and cost-saving through decades of practice and research; The Affordable Care Act reduces barriers to people receiving many clinical preventive services. Clinical preventive services can be supported and reinforced by community prevention efforts that have the potential to reach large numbers of people.

**Empowered People:** *Support people in making healthier choices.* Although policies and programs can make healthy options available, people still need to make healthy choices. When people have access to actionable and easy-to-understand information

and resources, they are empowered to make healthier choices. Efforts to educate and motivate people to make healthy choices should occur across the lifespan, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that young people are provided with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities they need to allow them to become healthy adults. In addition, we should provide knowledge and opportunities that support the unique needs of our growing older adult population.

**Elimination of Health Disparities:** *Eliminate disparities, improving the quality of life for all Americans.* All Americans should have the opportunity to live long, healthy, independent, and productive lives, regardless of their race or ethnicity; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics. In the United States, health disparities are often closely linked with social, economic, or environmental disadvantage. Clear evidence exists that with appropriate focus and investment, health disparities can be eliminated while simultaneously improving the health of all Americans.

## Priorities

Americans aspire to live long, healthy, and productive lives; however, obesity, tobacco use, misuse of alcohol and other substances, and community stressors (e.g., job and home losses, discrimination, family separations, and violence) are serious threats to health. In addition, too many Americans do not receive the preventive services that help maintain health, prevent or delay the onset of disease, and reduce health care costs. Each year, injuries and chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes are responsible for millions of premature deaths among Americans. In 2005, 133 million Americans – almost one in two adults – had at least one chronic illness. Furthermore, injuries are the leading cause of death among infants, youth, and young adults.<sup>6</sup> Most of these early

Together, chronic illnesses (e.g., cancer, obesity, depression) cause Americans to miss 2.5 billion days of work each year, resulting in lost productivity totaling more than \$1 trillion.<sup>7</sup>

# Strategic Directions and Priorities

deaths can be avoided, adding extra years of productivity and enjoyment for millions of people.

The Strategy's seven Priorities are designed to improve health and wellness for the entire U.S. population, including those groups disproportionately affected by disease and injury.

- Tobacco Free Living
- Preventing Drug Abuse and Excessive Alcohol Use
- Healthy Eating
- Active Living
- Injury and Violence Free Living
- Reproductive and Sexual Health
- Mental and Emotional Well-Being

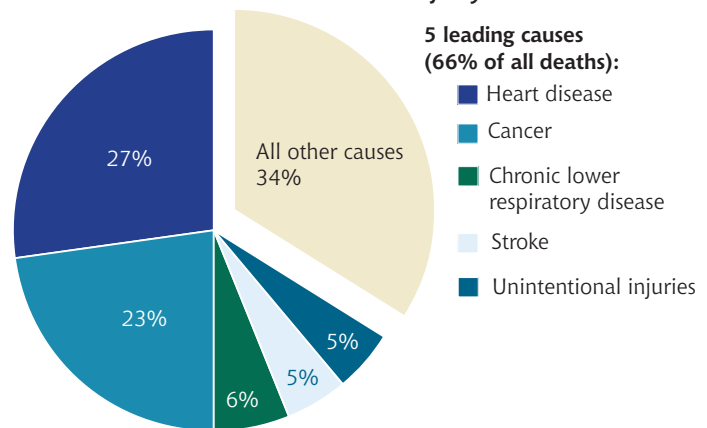
## Recommendations and Actions

The Strategy provides evidence-based recommendations for improving health and wellness and addressing leading causes of disability and death. Recommended policy, program, and systems approaches are identified for each Strategic Direction and Priority. Preference has been given to efforts that will have the greatest impact on the largest number of people and can be sustained over time. Each recommendation is based on the best recent scientific evidence (Appendix 5).

Current evidence for prevention is strong, and when effective strategies are implemented they drive significant improvement in the public's health. Effective types of strategies fall into five major categories: policy, systems change, environment, communications and media, and program and service delivery. Policy, system change, and environmental strategies can be very cost-effective ways to improve the public's health. There are, however, areas where additional effective strategies are needed. Future research and evaluation, including well designed trials for many complementary and alternative medicine therapies, will be critical to addressing unmet prevention and wellness needs, and new evidence-based strategies will be incorporated as they emerge.

Actions by Federal agencies and partners should build on and complement existing strategies, plans, and guidelines to improve health. Key documents that provide a more detailed set of recommendations or offer tools and resources are listed for each Strategic Direction and Priority (Appendix 6). In addition, because Healthy People 2020 is a foundational resource for all of the Strategic Directions and Priorities, relevant objectives are provided for each of the Strategy's recommendations (Appendix 5). The Strategic Directions and Priorities also include project highlights that show how communities have advanced prevention. These are provided for illustrative purposes to help others consider ways in which they too can take action.\*

Five Causes Account for the Majority of Deaths



Source: National Vital Statistics Report, CDC, 2008

In addition to the recommendations, the Strategy identifies actions that the Federal government will take and that partners can take to promote health and wellness. The "Federal government will" statements identify actions that the National Prevention Council departments will take to guide the implementation of the Strategy. These statements represent both new and existing initiatives. Some may include newly incorporating prevention into policies and regulations, while others may incorporate or enhance prevention as part of existing programs. Whether in new or existing initiatives, all actions will be subject to the annual budget processes that require balancing priorities within available resources. The "partners can" statements identify actions that different partners can voluntarily pursue to promote prevention. These evidence-based options draw from a variety of sources, including public input.

## Measuring Progress

The Strategy includes key indicators for a) the overarching goal, b) the leading causes of death, and c) each Strategic Direction and Priority. These indicators will be used to measure progress in prevention and to plan and implement future prevention efforts. Key indicators will be reported for the overall population and by subgroups as data are available. Indicators and 10-year targets are drawn from existing measurement efforts, especially Healthy People 2020. Detailed information about the key indicators can be found in Appendix 2. In some cases, data that can help describe the health status of certain populations are limited (e.g., data on sexual orientation and gender identity, disability status). As data sources and metrics are developed or enhanced, National Prevention Strategy's key indicators and targets will be updated.

\* Examples do not indicate an official review or endorsement of any program or initiative. Programs must always be administered in accordance with applicable state and Federal laws.

Leading Causes of Death*	Number of Deaths, Annually	2007 Baseline (deaths per 100,000 population)	10-Year Target
Cancer	562,875 (23%)	178.4	160.6
Coronary Heart Disease	406,351 (17%)	126.0	100.8
Stroke	135,952 (6%)	42.2	33.8
Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease	127,924 (5%)	40.8	35.1
Unintentional Injury	123,706 (5%)	40.0	36.0

\* Note: The leading cause of death is diseases of the heart (2007 baseline: 616,067 deaths, 190.9 deaths per 100,000 population); however, coronary heart disease deaths will be tracked because they account for the majority (66%) of deaths from disease of the heart, are the most amenable to prevention, and have an available 10-year target established for Healthy People 2020.







National Prevention, Health Promotion and Public Health Council