

American College of Preventive Medicine
physicians dedicated to prevention

Prevention: Foundational to Our Health System

In 2025, the United States will continue battling public health crises at local, state, federal and international levels. Rising rates of cancer, addiction, overdose, communicable diseases and chronic conditions – many of which are preventable – threaten our nation's health systems, weaken our economy, and damage national security. Natural disaster preparedness and responses to emerging global health threats are critical. Health systems have undervalued the power of prevention, prioritizing curative practices rather than preventive. The highest impact health interventions affect the upstream causes of disease, rather than after onset. Policies, rules and funding set by governments dictate long-lasting impacts on public health and health delivery. Prioritizing and funding preventive strategies will achieve longstanding population health benefits and can slow or even reduce the increasing costs of Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security Disability.

The American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM), the professional organization for board-certified preventive medicine physicians – specializing in public health, population health and disease prevention and health promotion across federal, local, organizational and individual levels – believes improving outcomes and quality of life requires transforming healthcare priorities to a wellness focused, value-based care system to promote health and longevity. To achieve these goals, ACPM recommends prioritizing the following in order to improve the health and quality of life of individuals, families, communities and populations through disease prevention and health promotion:

1. Establish Prevention as a Priority
2. Incentivize Wellness
3. Support Public Health Infrastructure

Establish Prevention as a Priority

Shifting to a wellness-based health system requires prioritizing strategic investments in preventive health services and practices. This includes lifestyle medicine, mental health services and substance use disorder prevention and treatment. Preventive Medicine physicians — trained in both clinical and public health — can guide policies to improve overall community health, with support from evidence-based research. In collaboration with health officials and policymakers, we can prioritize lifestyle changes and early interventions to improve long-term health outcomes and reduce the overall burden of chronic, preventable disease.

ACPM recommends:

- Increasing and stabilizing Graduate Medical Education (GME) funding for the specialty of Public Health & General Preventive Medicine to address shortages in the field.
- Embracing policies that increase independent informed nutrition decision-making, such as menu and nutrition labeling.
- Passing a Farm Bill that prioritizes public health by increasing nutritious food programs and reducing pollution.
- Prioritizing and investing in public health preparedness, surveillance, education and training related to the health impacts of communicable diseases and environmental impact on health.
- Supporting community-based tobacco cessation efforts and interventions to limit youth consumption of and addiction to nicotine products.
- Opposing censorship, limits or restrictions on peer-reviewed, evidence-based communications in the patient-doctor relationship in medical care and public health.

Incentivize Wellness

A wellness-based health system requires a well-rounded workforce, accessible quality care and patients empowered with accurate health information to make informed decisions. There must be a strong focus on external factors that influence health outside of medicine and the intersection of health with other policy areas. Governments should collaborate with community organizations and integrate a “Health in All Policies” approach to address the non-medical drivers of health, eliminate health disparities, promote prevention and prioritize physical, mental and emotional well-being across all levels of policymaking.

ACPM recommends:

- Shifting to value-based care.
- Leveraging Medicare to prioritize preventive services.
- Expanding the Congressional Budget Office scoring window to estimate the full economic value of preventive health legislation.
- Formulating policies designed to address non-medical drivers of health, including housing, food security, transportation and workforce development programs.
- Maximizing healthcare coverage through insurance or government-delivered programs.
- Retaining established patient protections, including prohibitions on exclusions for pre-existing conditions and prohibitions on benefit caps.
- Ensuring a viable safety net that includes appropriate resourcing of and eligibility for Medicaid, Medicare and the Children's Health Insurance Programs.
- Supporting first-dollar public and private insurance coverage of all USPSTF recommended clinical preventive services.

Support Public Health Infrastructure

Health agencies play a critical role in protecting communities, their leaders should be well-trained in medicine, public health and health systems administration. Preventive medicine physicians are uniquely equipped for the job. Funding and investment in public health infrastructure, workforce training and modernized technology are also essential to prevent and respond to health threats and address emerging public health issues.

ACPM recommends:

- Funding preventive medicine residency programs and programs that provide specialized training in addiction medicine, substance use prevention, treatment and related behavioral health conditions.
- Modernizing physician training to include advancements in lifestyle medicine, prevention, population health and technology-driven care.
- Applying technologically advanced, science-based and evidence-supported public health policy, infrastructure development and decision-making processes at all levels.
- Encouraging improving data-sharing among government departments.
- Advancing efforts to enable and facilitate evidence-based public dialogue on important public health issues.
- Funding the Prevention and Public Health Fund for preventive services/programs and use as originally intended.
- Ensuring adequate federal funding for state, local and federal health agencies to hire board-certified preventive medicine and public health physicians, support public health preparedness, support efforts to decrease chronic disease and address other health threats.

In the face of the chronic disease epidemic, integrating wellness and prevention into health systems is crucial for improving long-term outcomes and reducing costs. As the U.S. moves toward a new era in healthcare, prioritizing preventive measures will yield substantial benefits for both population health and economic productivity. ACPM advocates for transforming healthcare into a wellness-focused, value-based system that tackles the upstream causes of disease. Achieving this requires increased emphasis on lifestyle medicine to provide individuals with the information and resources they need to thrive and investment in preventive health and the preventive medicine workforce to ensure our systems can effectively deliver sustainable, proactive care.