

10 Things you need to know about: PREVENTING CHRONIC DISEASE



BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER

1 **The term “prevention” refers to strategies** that seek to avoid disease and illness by keeping people healthy in the first place and by averting the progression of disease. In practice, prevention covers a range of activities that can occur in a variety of settings, from mammograms and immunizations to weight-management programs for pre-diabetics.

2 **Although health care spending is declining,** Americans still spend twice as much on health care as citizens of other developed nations. Despite that, America has poorer health outcomes than other developed nations, including shorter life expectancies and higher rates of infant mortality, obesity and chronic disease.

3 **Chronic disease is a major driver of health care** spending. In fact, treating chronic diseases accounts for 86 percent of U.S. health care costs. Fifty percent of American adults currently have at least one chronic disease.

4 **Social, environmental and economic factors are powerful** determinants of health. Where people live, work, learn and play has a greater influence on their overall health than what goes on in the doctor’s office.

5 **Preventing chronic diseases before they start or progress** offers the potential for significant savings in treatment costs down the line.

6 **The health care system’s predominant fee-for-service** payment structure doesn’t incentivize the health care system to connect with the community outside the clinic walls or invest in prevention to reduce costs of later treatments. In a fee-for-service model, there is no reward, financial or otherwise, for health care providers or systems that work to prevent illness rather than treat it.

7 **The Affordable Care Act offers opportunities to better** align incentives for health care providers and systems to take a more prevention-centered approach and improve population health.

8 **The evidence needed to make clear and** confident assertions about what prevention strategies can dramatically reduce costs is just beginning to take shape. Unifying this information and better measuring cost impacts is critical for policymakers.

9 **BPC recommends building the evidence base** on the value of prevention. The government, as well as public and private stakeholders, should support robust economic analysis of prevention interventions and promote strategies that are proven to improve health and cut costs.

10 **Health care reform is beginning to shift the way** we deliver health care in America. BPC recommends using this opportunity to ensure that strategies and incentives for prevention are a central, integral part of the future of American health care.