



Making Prevention a National Priority

- As we fix our broken health care system, we must invest in the kind of front end health care that we know lowers overall health care costs and keeps people well and healthy — preventive care.
- Preventive health care is instrumental in improving health and controlling costs. But gaps exist in our prevention and care management systems. For example:
 - Despite the growing obesity epidemic, nearly half of American adults do not receive advice on weight or exercise when they see their doctor.
 - In many cases, doctors do not ensure that patients are up-to-date on recommended preventive care.
 - Investing in preventive screenings will decrease long-term health costs and increase productivity. For example, cancer is the second leading cause of death and costs the country nearly \$200 billion in medical costs and lost productivity each year. We should invest more resources on the front end and reduce these costs to individuals and our country.
- Our current system short-changes preventive care and particularly neglects wellness. It focuses on treating preventable diseases after they occur, rather than promoting good health up front. Since insurers have no guarantee that people will remain in their plans, they have little incentive to invest in keeping people healthy over an extended period of time.
- We can and should make prevention a signature of our health care system. We should consider building on existing models and creating new policies that make prevention a national priority.
 - Both clinicians and individuals can take important steps to close the gap in the delivery of preventive services. Health Information Technology (HIT), such as automatic reminder systems and prompts, will help ensure that doctors and patients keep up-to-date on preventive care and will make daily practices more efficient by increasing coordination of care.
 - Preventive services could be carved out of private health insurance, removing the perverse incentives in the current system. Nationally financing and delivering a universal preventive benefit would improve the overall health of individuals and their communities.
 - But doctors cannot do it alone; individuals must also take responsibility for their own health. By taking a more active role in the health care decision-making process, focusing on preventive care and making appropriate lifestyle choices, individuals can make a difference — and all of these steps are easier with affordable health care coverage.
- It is time for both Congress and the Administration to stop side-stepping the issue of health reform. As our nation works to fix our broken health care system, we need to make prevention a national priority.