

New Study: Boosting 5 Preventive Services Would Save 100,000 Lives Each Year

*An Aspirin a Day Would Prevent 45,000 Deaths Annually,
According to New Report by Partnership for Prevention*

Washington, D.C. – Increasing the use of just five preventive services would save more than 100,000 lives every year in the U.S., according to a new study released today by Partnership for Prevention. That includes 45,000 lives that would be saved each year if more adults took a daily low-dose aspirin to prevent heart disease.

The new study, funded by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and WellPoint Foundation, found that a few measures—such as more adults getting flu shots and being screened for cancer—could save tens of thousands of lives each year in the United States.

The study found serious deficiencies in the use of preventive care for the nation as a whole – and particularly troubling shortfalls among racial and ethnic populations.

“A lot of Americans are not getting live-saving preventive services, particularly racial and ethnic minorities. As a result, too many people are dying prematurely or living with diseases that could have been prevented,” said Eduardo Sanchez, MD, MPH, Chair of the National Commission on Prevention Priorities, a blue-ribbon panel convened by Partnership for Prevention to guide the study. “We could get much better value for our health care dollar by focusing upstream on prevention.”

STUDY FINDINGS

- **45,000** additional lives would be saved each year if we increased to 90 percent the portion of adults who take aspirin daily to prevent heart disease. Today, fewer than half of American adults take aspirin preventively.
- **42,000** additional lives would be saved each year if we increased to 90 percent the portion of smokers who are advised by a health professional to quit and are offered medication or other assistance. Today, only 28 percent of smokers receive such services.
- **14,000** additional lives would be saved each year if we increased to 90 percent the portion of adults age 50 and older who are up to date with any recommended screening for colorectal cancer. Today, fewer than 50 percent of adults are up to date with screening.

- **12,000** additional lives would be saved each year if we increased to 90 percent the portion of adults age 50 and older immunized against influenza annually. Today, 37 percent of adults have had an annual flu vaccination.
- Nearly **4,000** additional lives would be saved each year if we increased to 90 percent the portion of women age 40 and older who have been screened for breast cancer in the past 2 years. Today, 67 percent of women have been screened in the past 2 years.
- **30,000** cases of pelvic inflammatory disease would be prevented annually if we increased to 90 percent the portion of sexually active young women who have been screened in the past year for chlamydia infection. Today, 40 percent of young women are being screened annually.

“This report illustrates that the health benefits would be great if more people took preventive actions,” said Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “More illnesses would be avoided, fewer lives would be lost, and there would be more efficient use of our limited health care resources. It’s important that all of us make a concerted attempt to focus our energies and efforts on preventing diseases, not just treating them.”

MINORITIES AT MAJOR RISK

According to the new report, African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans all use preventive services at lower rates compared to the white, non-Hispanic population in the U.S.

- Hispanic Americans have lower utilization compared to non-Hispanic whites and African Americans for 10 of the 11 preventive services analyzed. For example,
 - Hispanic smokers are 55 percent less likely to get assistance to quit smoking from a health professional than white smokers.
- Asian Americans have the lowest utilization of any group for aspirin use as well as breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening. For example,
 - Asian men age 40 and older and women age 50 and older are 40 percent less likely to use aspirin to prevent heart disease than white adults.
- Despite higher screening rates among African Americans for colorectal and breast cancer compared to Hispanic and Asian Americans, increasing screening in African Americans would have a bigger impact on their health because they have higher mortality for those conditions.
 - If the 42 percent of African Americans age 50 and older up-to-date with any recommended screening for colorectal cancer increased to 90 percent, 1,800 additional lives would be saved annually.

“This report documents that minority groups in America use less preventive care,” said Dr. David Satcher, former U.S. Surgeon General and Director of the Center on Excellence in Health Disparities at the Morehouse School of Medicine. “One reason is that many Americans, particularly minorities, have no continuity in their health care, no relationship with a doctor or other medical professional who can ensure that they are getting all the preventive care they need. We have to transform our sick care system into a health care system that works for everybody.”

The new report, titled “*Preventive Care: A National Profile on Use, Disparities, and Health Benefits*” is available on Partnership for Prevention’s website at www.prevent.org. It is a follow-up study to a 2006 Partnership for Prevention report which ranked 25 evidence-based clinical preventive services recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices based on service’s health impact and economic value.

Partnership worked in collaboration with HealthPartners Research Foundation, a Minneapolis-based clinical and health services research organization. Partnership’s work is guided by the National Commission on Prevention Priorities, a blue-ribbon panel made up of some of the nation’s top doctors, researchers, and business and healthcare leaders.

“The bottom line is that we need to strengthen the U.S. health system by investing more in preventing disease,” said Partnership for Prevention President John M. Clymer. “This new report makes it clear that following a few preventive steps may end up saving your life.”

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Partnership for Prevention is a nationally-recognized nonprofit membership organization of medical and health professionals, academic institutions, voluntary health associations, businesses, government agencies and other groups dedicated to advancing policies and practices to prevent disease and improve the health of all Americans. For more information about Partnership for Prevention, please visit <http://www.prevent.org>.