

# Community-Based, Primary Prevention: Strategies in Action

Some prevention strategies that take place at the community, rather than at the patient level, have been demonstrated or projected to have a positive return on investment (ROI). Policy changes often take several years of advocacy by coalitions of CBOs.

## Prevention strategies with demonstrated or projected ROI:

- **Tobacco prevention:** state comprehensive tobacco control programs,<sup>1</sup> smoke-free housing policies,<sup>2</sup> programs to prevent tobacco initiation in youths,<sup>3</sup> taxes on tobacco products.<sup>4</sup>
- **Promotion of healthy diets:** limits on salt intake,<sup>5</sup> school food and beverage standards for foods sold outside the cafeteria,<sup>6</sup> access to water in schools,<sup>7</sup> taxes on unhealthy beverages.<sup>8</sup>
- **Physical activity promotion:** fall prevention programs for older adults,<sup>9</sup> school-based physical activity programs,<sup>10</sup> promotion of zoning that creates walking and cycling paths,<sup>11</sup> creation and maintenance of parks with programming in urban areas.<sup>12</sup>



## Equally important are strategies that have social returns on investment by reducing the risks for the largely preventable health conditions that drive health inequities.

Many of these approaches will result in cost savings over time; more research is needed in this area. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has compiled a guide with over 100 examples of evidence-based prevention strategies that reduce risks for disease and injury at the community level.<sup>13</sup> Additional research has contributed to this body of knowledge.



- **Making healthy food accessible:** California's Market Match, a statewide program that doubles the buying power of federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) dollars for fresh produce purchased at farmers markets, increases the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables by low-income shoppers and strengthens the economic vitality of small and medium size farms.<sup>14</sup> Government agencies that adopt healthy food purchasing policies for agency-run programs increase demand for healthier products, model healthy eating, and may also affect clients' food choices beyond the institutional environment.<sup>15</sup>
- **Physical activity promotion:** Creating or enhancing access to places such as parks, trails, and greenways for physical activity, combined with community awareness and structured programs increases the number of people who use them and who engage in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.<sup>16</sup>

- **Air quality improvement:** Air pollution controls can reduce rates of lung disease, heart disease and childhood asthma.<sup>17, 18</sup> Woodstove exchange programs that encourage residents to replace older stoves with newer, cleaner burning models have been shown to reduce air pollutants and decrease respiratory infections among children.<sup>19</sup> Increasing the tree canopy in urban areas improves air quality by reducing air temperature, reducing energy consumption in buildings, and directly removing pollutants from the air.<sup>20</sup>
- **Alcohol use and injury prevention:** Limits on the days and hours when alcohol can be sold helps protect all community residents (even non-drinkers) from experiencing the many harms of excessive drinking including binge drinking, motor-vehicle crashes, and violent crime.<sup>21, 22</sup>
- **Youth cannabis use prevention:** Chronic cannabis use during adolescence has been associated with impaired brain development, educational achievement, and psychosocial functioning.<sup>23</sup> Regulation of cannabis retail outlets including limiting the number and locations of retailers through licensing or zoning, limiting hours/days of sale, and regulating where cannabis and related products can be sold have all been shown to decrease cannabis use among youth.<sup>24</sup>



- **Childhood obesity prevention:** Combining meal or fruit and vegetable snack interventions with physical activity interventions in elementary schools increases students' physical activity, increases their fruit and vegetable consumption, and decreases the prevalence of overweight and obesity.<sup>25</sup>
- **Violence prevention:** Parks After Dark (PAD) is a program of Los Angeles County that began in 2010 as a prevention strategy of the County's Gang Violence Reduction Initiative. PAD extends hours of park operation in neighborhoods with higher crime rates during summer weekend evenings and offers a variety of free activities. There has been a decline in violent and nonviolent crimes in nearly all neighborhoods where PAD has been taking place between 2010 and 2022. Violent crimes have dropped by as much as 31% and nonviolent crimes have dropped by as much as 25%.<sup>26</sup>
- **Tobacco prevention:** Policies that prohibit smoking in indoor spaces and designated public areas, and which reduce exposure to secondhand smoke are effective in reducing tobacco use, increasing the number of tobacco users who quit, reducing initiation of tobacco use among young people, and reducing tobacco-related illness and death.<sup>27</sup>

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**Data sources available at:**

<https://preventionpolicygroup.org/data-sources/>

