



Pediatrics is Prevention

It is the position of the American Academy of Pediatrics that health care reform should:

- ★ Include preventive health care benefits for children, based on the recommendations for well child visits issued under the federally-funded *Bright Futures* guidelines.
- ★ Remove barriers to preventive care for children, such as co-payments and deductibles for immunizations.
- ★ Recognize that healthy lifestyles are the core of preventive health, and that our nation must promote healthy, active living for children, their families, and their communities.

The Issue

Prevention is the heart of pediatric medicine. The mission of pediatric care is to promote and monitor the physical, mental, and behavioral/developmental health of children at every stage of development. Children see their doctors on a set schedule of well-child visits during which they receive crucial immunizations and are screened for a wide array of problems to ensure that their development is proceeding appropriately. The healthy development of a child affects the ability to learn and grow into a productive adult.

Children's health is an investment in primary prevention, addressing the development of disease at its earliest and most preventable stages. Eighty percent of children who are overweight at age 10–15 years are obese adults at age 25. About one-third of all youth smokers will eventually die prematurely from smoking-related disease.

Current Status

Federal policies currently do not prioritize children's preventive health care. As a result, critical opportunities to promote health and reduce future health care costs are being lost.

The definitive standards for pediatric well-child and preventive care are found in *Bright Futures*, a national health promotion and disease prevention initiative developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics with support from the U.S. Health Research and Services Agency (HRSA). In addition to providing comprehensive guidance to practitioners, *Bright Futures* has been adopted by numerous states to inform preventive schedules for child Medicaid benefits. Other guidelines, such as the recommendations issued by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, are insufficient to address the full range of preventive services needed by children.