

Public Health Definitions for Health System Transformation

- Coordinated Care Organizations are tasked with improving health care and lowering costs in part by preventing complicated health conditions before they begin.
- Local public health authorities focus on improving population health through implementation of strategies backed by research. Public Health can bring these resources to the table to support the work of Coordinated Care Organizations.
- The definitions and examples below can help provide common terminology for health care and public health as it relates to prevention.

Primary Prevention

- Primary prevention means avoiding or delaying the initial occurrence of a disease or condition.¹
- Primary prevention tends to occur in the community before an individual is affected by a condition that would require support from the health care system.
- Examples of primary prevention include:
 - Improving nutrition and physical activity standards in schools so children eat healthier and are less likely to become overweight and obese.
 - Media campaigns to discourage people from initiating tobacco use.
 - Working with local governments to create community infrastructure that includes sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, greenways and access to nutritious foods to encourage physical activity and healthy eating thereby decreasing the likelihood that community members become overweight and obese.
 - Passing ordinances to reduce public exposure to secondhand smoke.

Secondary and Tertiary Prevention

Secondary and tertiary prevention slows the progression of existing disease through early detection, treatment and rehabilitation.²

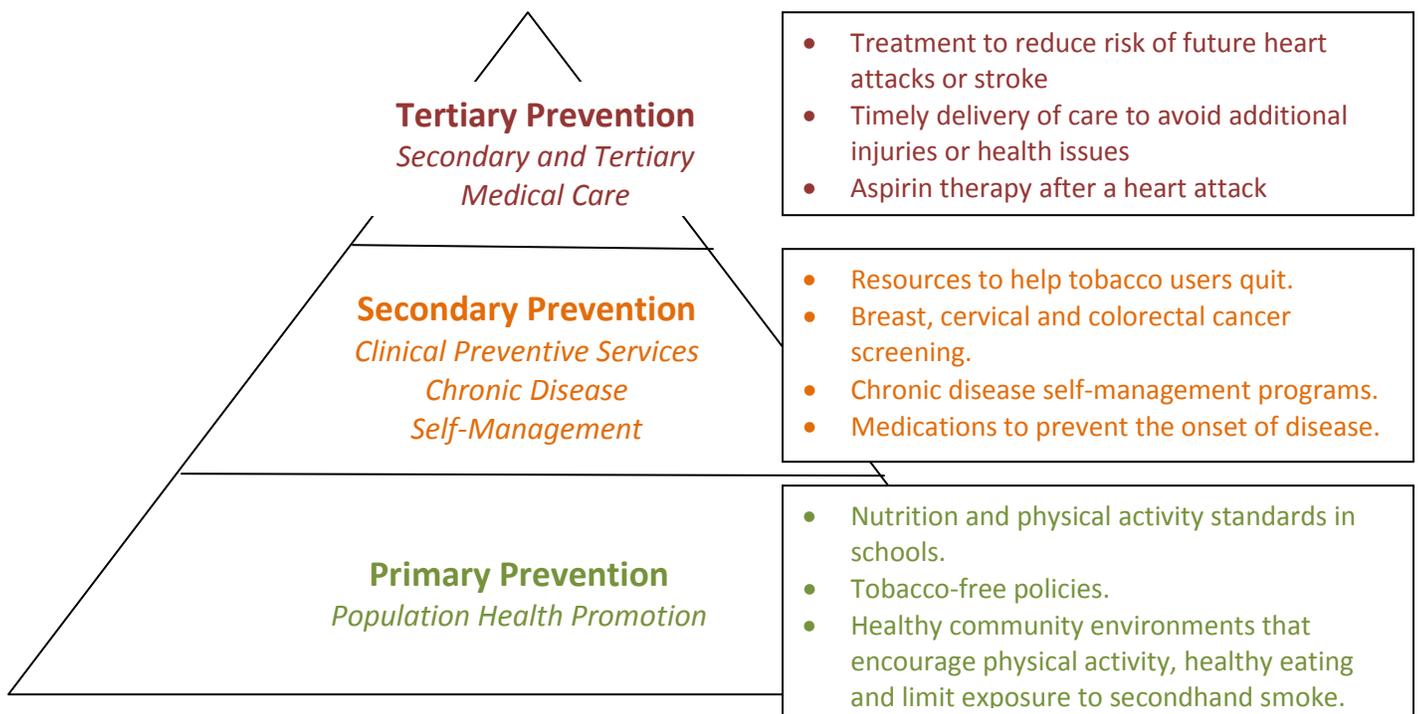
- Examples of secondary prevention include:
 - Providing information, education and resources to help tobacco users quit.
 - Screenings for early detection of chronic diseases and other conditions, such as colorectal cancer and hypertension.
 - Evidence-based chronic disease self-management education programs, like Living Well with Chronic Conditions, which help people with chronic conditions live healthier lives with their conditions.

¹ World Health Organization. Health promotion glossary. 1998. See: http://www.who.int/hpr/NPH/docs/hp_glossary_en.pdf (Accessed: 7 February 2012).

² Ibid.

- Providing treatment to prevent health issues from becoming worse, like high blood pressure medication.
- Tertiary prevention is generally managed within the health care setting, although some public health approaches can be used to reduce morbidity and mortality of disease at this level. Examples of tertiary prevention include:
 - Treatment after a heart attack to prevent future heart attacks or stroke.
 - Ensuring that a stroke patient receives care in a timely fashion in order to avoid any further damage to the body.
 - Aspirin therapy for individuals with a history of heart attack.

Levels of Prevention³



³ Adapted from South Carolina Area Health Education Center and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.