



Prevention Works in Maternal and Child Health

The March of Dimes strongly supports comprehensive, preventive health care for all women of childbearing age, infants and children. Research has shown that preventive health measures can improve individual and public health while saving health care dollars.

Childhood immunizations are among the most cost-effective preventive health measures.

- Every dollar invested in immunizing a child saves \$16.50 in medical and societal costs.¹
- Every dollar invested in varicella (chicken pox) vaccine saves \$4.37 in direct medical costs and other societal costs.²

Preconception care reduces both maternal and infant hospitalizations.

- Every dollar spent on preconception care saves \$1.60-\$5.19 in hospitalization costs for mothers and babies.³

Smoking cessation and alcohol counseling improves health and reduces medical costs for pregnant women and their infants.

- One dollar invested in screening and brief counseling about alcohol misuse among pregnant women saves \$4.30 in health care costs.⁴
- Each dollar invested in smoking cessation programs for pregnant women saves \$3 in health care costs.⁵

Nutrition and counseling provided under WIC reduce rates of low-birth weight and pre-term birth and produce a variety of other positive health outcomes.

- Every dollar spent in WIC saves \$1.77-\$3.33 in medical care for newborns and mothers in the first 60 days after birth.^{6,7}

Prenatal care generates cost savings for women with high-risk pregnancies.

- Intensive prenatal care reduces hospital and NICU admissions among infants, resulting in cost savings ranging from \$1,768 to \$5,560 per birth.^{8,9}
- Intensive prenatal care for women with high-risk pregnancies saves \$1.37 for every \$1 invested in augmented prenatal care.¹⁰

Newborn screening and early childhood screening decrease long-term health and societal costs among infants and children.

- The lifetime cost of developmental disabilities prevented by newborn screening ranges from \$500,000 - \$1 million in the US.¹¹
- Every dollar invested in early childhood developmental screening and treatment saves \$17 in health and societal costs.¹²

Studies of well-child care show evidence of improved health outcomes and lower health expenditures, although more research is needed.

- Children enrolled in Medicaid who receive well-child visits up to age two were 48% less likely to have an avoidable hospitalization.¹³
- Infants without complete well-child care are more likely to visit the emergency room within the first six months of life.¹⁴
- Among young children enrolled in Medicaid, within the first five years of life, children with their first preventive dental visit at age 1 had \$262 in dental costs compared to \$546 among children whose first dental visit was at age 4-5.¹⁵

Based on this clear and compelling evidence, the March of Dimes supports maintaining and increasing our nation's investment in preventive health care for women and children. Preventive health programs generate a significant return on investment and improve the health and wellbeing of our nation's families. While more research is needed and welcome, preventive care is an investment that our nation cannot afford not to make.

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