

PRIORITY 1 PREVENTION

Prioritise prevention as an essential component of UHC

Rationale

Investing in NCD prevention is essential for the success of UHC, but is too often seen as a dispensable luxury, rather than the bedrock of sustainable health coverage. Though many NCDs are preventable, the current trajectory of NCDs is set to cripple health systems and economies worldwide. Without sustained focus on the upstream drivers (social, commercial and environmental) of these diseases and the modifiable risk factors, UHC will drift out of reach for many populations. UHC packages must include the proven, cost-effective prevention strategies in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the global strategies for tobacco control, alcohol, nutrition, physical activity, air pollution and the WHO Best Buys and recommended policy interventions, which would save millions of lives.

Inclusion of these interventions is an important litmus test for a health system that is underpinned by primary health care services spanning the full continuum of care from health promotion, disease prevention, screening and diagnosis, treatment and care, rehabilitation, and palliative care across the lifecourse. UHC benefit packages must be designed with these two important NCD dimensions in mind – the continuum of care (including primary, secondary and tertiary prevention), and action across all stages of life, given that many of the health problems we encounter in adulthood stem from our experiences early in life—in some cases, even from before we are born.



Illustrative Advocacy Asks

Ensure that UHC services span the full continuum of care, including health promotion, disease prevention, screening and diagnosis, treatment and care, rehabilitation, and palliative care across the lifecourse.

Ensure policy coherence with national and international legislation on population health, such as tobacco legislation and full implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), and implement measures to rapidly improve both indoor and outdoor air quality.

Prioritise essential public health functions and address the commercial, environmental, and social determinants of health via implementation of the full set of WHO recommended cost effective interventions for the prevention and control of NCDs.

Recognise the need for a 'health in all policies' approach and work with non-health sectors to create health-promoting environments that reduce exposure to health-harming products and substances, including pollutants.