

Priority actions for the NCD crisis will prevent millions of premature NCD events every year

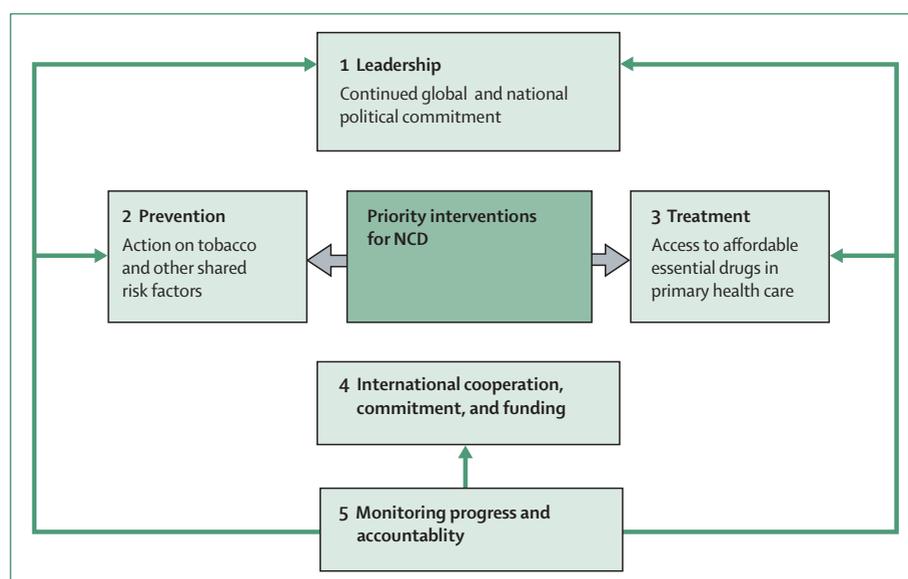
The NCD crisis

NCD (non-communicable diseases), including cardiovascular disease (largely heart disease and stroke), cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes, cause two of every three deaths each year. The massive global toll of NCD deepens poverty, impedes development, threatens health systems, and is a major cause of disability and health inequality.

The solution

We know how to prevent millions of premature NCD deaths at low cost. *The Lancet* NCD Action Group and the NCD Alliance propose five priority actions to tackle this crisis (figure).¹

Five priority actions



The overall goal

The overall goal is to reduce NCD death rates by 2% per year, saving at least 36 million lives over the next decade. The cost of the proposed package is small (table); in total it will require just US\$ 9 billion per year.

UN HLM: a major opportunity for global health

The UN will convene a High-Level Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases (UN HLM) on Sept 19–20, 2011, in New York, USA. This meeting will stimulate global and national action in five areas:

1. Leadership

Heads of state and governments should expand national responses to NCD by:

- Framing NCD as a critical development issue
- Investing in coordinated action across the whole of government and involving the private sector and non-government organisations
- Committing to a small number of priority interventions (table) with timed targets and indicators for assessing outcomes

2. Prevention

Top priorities (table) for a global movement to prevent NCD are to address the risk factors that cause NCD:

<http://www.who.int/fctc>

- Acceleration of implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, with the goal of a world essentially free from tobacco by 2040
- Reduction of salt intake to less than 5 g per person per day by 2025
- Improvement of diets and physical activity including early in life
- Reduction of harmful alcohol intake

3. Treatment

Treatment requires strengthening primary health-care systems and:

- Increased access to high-quality, low-cost medicines for people at high risk of heart disease or stroke, and for people who already have diabetes, cancer, and chronic respiratory diseases
- Provision of affordable vaccines, as appropriate, to people at risk of infection-related cancers
- Provision of pain relief for end-of-life care

Costs of priority interventions:
country examples

| | Interventions | Cost per person per year (US\$) | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | | China | India | Russia |
| 1. Tobacco use | Accelerated implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control | 0.14 | 0.16 | 0.49 |
| 2. Dietary salt | Mass-media campaigns and voluntary action by food industry to reduce consumption | 0.05 | 0.06 | 0.16 |
| 3. Obesity, unhealthy diet, and physical inactivity | Mass-media campaigns, food taxes, subsidies, labelling, and marketing restrictions | 0.43 | 0.35 | 1.18 |
| 4. Harmful alcohol intake | Tax increases, advertising bans, and restricted access | 0.07 | 0.05 | 0.52 |
| 5. Cardiovascular risk reduction | Combination of drugs for individuals at high risk of NCDs | 1.02 | 0.90 | 1.73 |
| Total cost per person* | .. | 1.72 | 1.52 | 4.08 |

*Excludes any cost synergies or future treatment cost savings.

Table: Estimated costs of five priority interventions for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in three countries

4. International cooperation

Top priorities for international cooperation to prevent NCD are to:

- Raise the priority of NCD on the global agenda and increase funding for their prevention and treatment
- Promote synergies between programmes for NCD and other global health priorities, such as infectious diseases and the reduction of climate change; there is a direct link between preventing NCD and promoting sustainability
- Invest in the proposed low-cost strategies because these will have an enormous impact, bring rapid returns, and have co-benefits for other NCD

5. Monitoring, reporting, and accountability

Countries should establish goals and targets to reduce the major risk factors and NCD death rates and report regularly to the UN on progress towards these goals and targets.

Reference

- 1 Beaglehole R, Bonita R, Horton R, et al, for *The Lancet* NCD Action Group and the NCD Alliance. Priority actions for the non-communicable disease crisis. *Lancet* 2011; **377**: 1438–47.