

## Definitions of Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Prevention

### Primary prevention

Here the goal is to protect healthy people from developing a disease or experiencing an injury in the first place. For example:

- education about good nutrition, the importance of regular exercise, and the dangers of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs
- education and legislation about proper seatbelt and helmet use
- regular exams and screening tests to monitor risk factors for illness
- immunization against infectious disease
- controlling potential hazards at home and in the workplace

### Secondary prevention

These interventions happen after an illness or serious risk factors have already been diagnosed. The goal is to halt or slow the progress of disease (if possible) in its earliest stages; in the case of injury, goals include limiting long-term disability and preventing re-injury. For example:

- clinical management in primary care to prevent a first or second heart attack or stroke in people at high risk or with identified disease
- regular exams and screening tests in people with known risk factors for illness
- providing suitably modified work for injured workers

### Tertiary prevention

This focuses on helping people manage complicated, long-term health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer and chronic musculoskeletal pain. The goals include preventing further physical deterioration and maximizing quality of life. For example:

- cardiac or stroke rehabilitation programs
- chronic pain management programs
- patient support groups

Self management work in long term conditions should be seen as both secondary and tertiary prevention. The goal should be to seek to ensure people with established disease live as well as possible to best quality of life for as long as possible.