"Prevention"—it would be high on a list of current buzzwords. As a concept, though, it's a bit squishy since we're talking about the absence of something, whether a disease or drug use or shoplifting.

But squishy or not, it's real. Dr. Barry Franklin of the American Heart Association has said that research shows 50-year-old people who have been able to prevent the "biggest risks" for heart disease (high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, diabetes or obesity) will "have less than a 1 in 10 chance of ever developing heart disease." [1]

As a nation, we're now focused on actually making prevention a key component of health: in mid-June the Obama administration unveiled the National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy (part of the health reform legislation passed in March 2010). The "National Prevention Strategy," as it's being called in slightly shorter form, was developed by participants from 17 federal agencies, led by the US Surgeon General. They consulted with outside experts and sought public input at town hall meetings across the country. [2]

The workplace is very much a focus of the plan. One of the 4 strategic directions, "Healthy and Safe Community Environments," refers not only to more neighborhood sidewalks or cleaner water but also includes "work sites" among the places that "can be transformed to support well-being and make healthy choices easy and affordable." Workplace decisions and practices can eliminate safety hazards, increase workers' physical activity, or reduce pollution (through green building design or carpooling or telecommuting). [3]

What's next? Funding will be available to support activities in line with the National Prevention Strategy [4], and the council that developed it will be looking for positive changes in the fact that Americans currently live an average of 78 years but only 69 of them are healthy. [5]


3 - HealthCare.gov (Read the National Prevention Strategy) - www.healthcare.gov/center/councils/nphpphc/strategy/report.html
