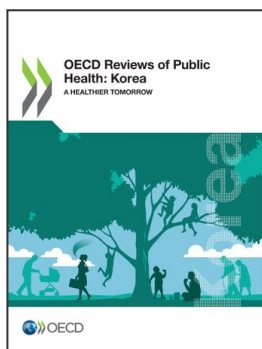


Foreword

This report is the third in the OECD's series of reports reviewing public health policies across selected OECD countries. Health care systems across OECD are increasingly under pressure from social changes – including demographic changes and aging populations – and emerging new health challenges – from a growing burden of chronic disease, to re-emerging and new communicable diseases, or a growing burden of mental ill-health – which demand a strong public health response.

The OECD Reviews of Public Health provide in-depth analysis and policy recommendations to strengthen priority areas of countries' public health systems, highlighting best practice examples that allow learning from shared experiences, and the spreading of innovative approaches. In particular, this series of Reviews of Public Health builds on the OECD's long-standing programme of work on the economics of public health, applying this extensive expertise to country-specific challenges. The OECD Reviews of Public Health are a tool to help countries to strengthen their national public health systems, and help countries to develop and implement innovative public health actions.

This OECD Public Health Review of Korea assesses the current scale of public health challenges in Korea, and efficacy of existing public health policies to respond to them. The time is now for Korea to turn greater policy attention towards strengthening its public health system, tackling key behavioural risks, and preparing for potential technological change in the health care sector – notably the changing importance of precision medicine – and preparing for public health emergencies. In relation to healthily lifestyles, this review recommends that Korea scales-up policies to prevent harmful alcohol consumption, and strengthen efforts to reduce rates of smoking. In light of Korea's rapidly aging population and the shift in burden of disease towards chronic conditions, Korea should also focus on strengthening the primary care capacity, for example in community or Public Health Centers. To prepare the health system for technological changes, the review recommends that the government continues its current cautious approach to genomic medicine and testing, ensuring that the benefits and harms for both the population and the health system are well-balanced. Finally, the review encourages Korea to build on recent reforms made to strengthen the response system for hazards and threats, and better align response capacity across all stakeholders.



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