

About this story:

This story was produced by Kaiser Health News, an editorially independent program of the Kaiser Family Foundation.

The law also made big changes to the Medicare program, including closing the notorious “doughnut hole” that left some seniors with big drug bills despite having insurance. The ACA also extended coverage of more preventive benefits for people with Medicare coverage.

Generic biologics

An important, though frequently overlooked, portion of the health law created the first legal framework and regulatory pathway for copies of expensive, already FDA-approved biologic drugs, called biosimilars, to reach the market. Biologic drugs are among the most expensive medications and treat life-threatening ailments such as cancer, rheumatoid arthritis and macular degeneration. It is unclear what would happen to the stream of biosimilars already approved if the law is struck down—will their approvals be revoked? What about medications currently in the approval pipeline?

Funding for Natives, training programs

Among other little-known features of the ACA is a provision that permanently authorized the U.S. Indian Health Service, which provides health coverage for more than 2.5 million Native Americans and Alaska Natives. An overturn of the law could leave in doubt the legality of some of the program’s operations.

Here’s one more you may not have thought about. On the theory that if more people have health insurance more people will seek medical care, the ACA has an entire section devoted to increasing the supply of not just physicians, but also nurses, therapists, dentists and community health centers. Many of these training programs could flounder if the ACA is overturned.

And those now-ubiquitous calorie counts on restaurant menus? Those are there because of the ACA. Some people may not be sad to see those go away. But if the ACA is invalidated, the health system likely will change in ways that no one can predict. □

WEEKLY DOSE

Are you drinking enough water?

We all know it is important to stay hydrated, but what exactly does “hydrated” mean? Eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day is a good start, but the Institute of Medicine now recommends that men get a total of 13 cups, and for women they suggest nine. Pregnant women need a little more, and kids a little less. If you’re sweating from heat or exercise, or if you are suffering from an illness that makes you throw up or run a fever, then you should up your intake. Dehydration can result in headaches, mood swings, reduced concentration and fatigue. All fluids count toward your daily dose, and there are plenty of foods that contain water, including watermelon, cucumbers and lettuce. The key is to listen to your body and not wait until you are thirsty to drink up. And pay attention to your pee—it should be the color of lemonade.




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