

## 5 key takeaways from the MAHA commission report



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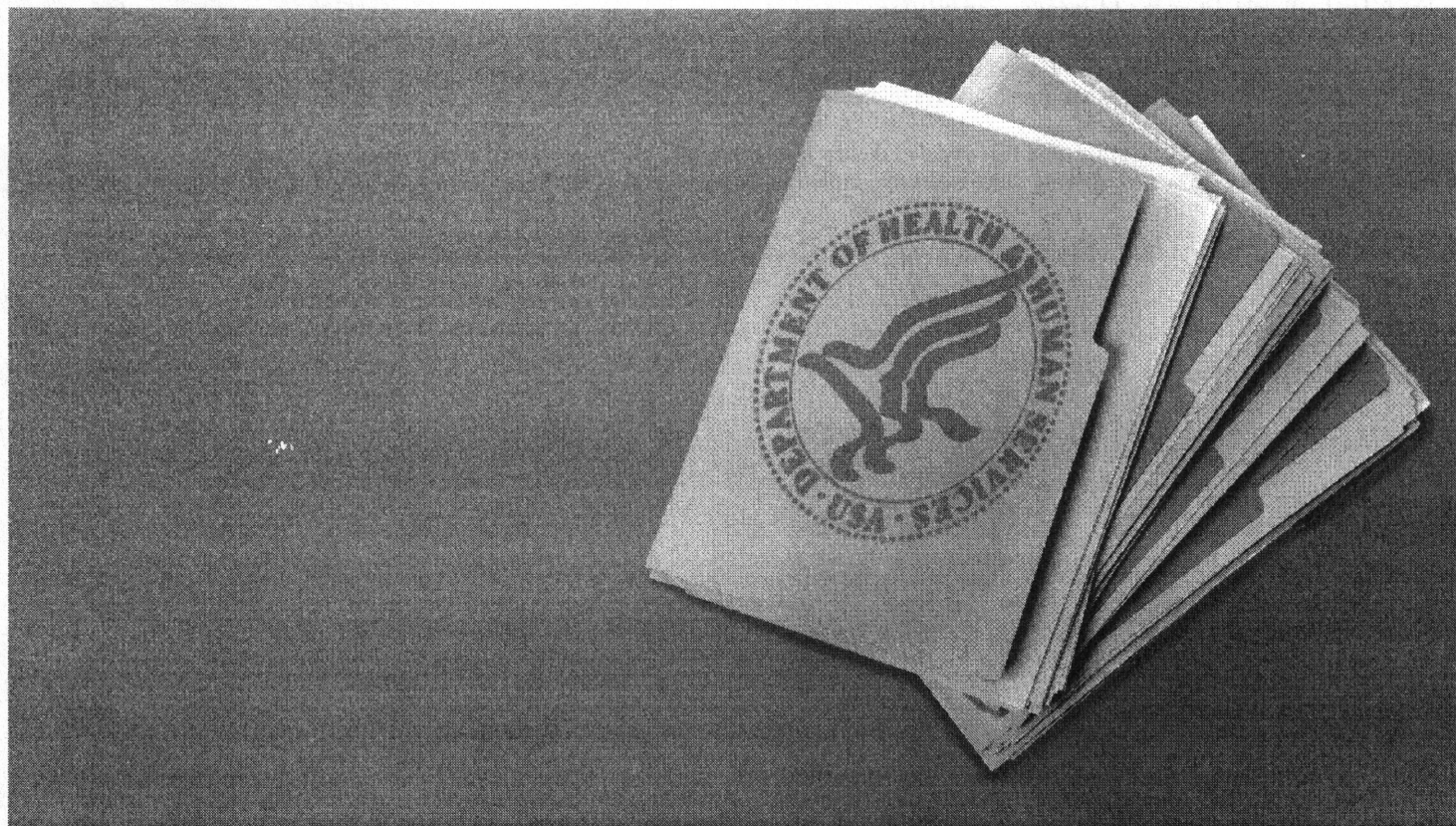


Illustration: Brendan Lynch/Axios

President Trump's Make America Healthy Again Commission blamed factors including bad diets, chemical exposure and unnecessary medication for causing childhood chronic illness in a highly anticipated report released Thursday.

Why it matters: The 68-page document from a panel led by HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. seeks to lay out a unifying theory around what's causing conditions like obesity, autoimmune conditions and behavioral disorders in kids.

But it was developed in little more than three months and seeks to strike a balance between protecting consumers and promoting economic interests, especially when it comes to pesticides and chemicals commonly used in agriculture.


"This is not, in any way, an attack on the American farmers or industry," NIH director Jay Bhattacharya, a member of the commission, told reporters Thursday. "What this is is a commitment to get excellent answers, excellent science, so that we can enable people to do the right thing."

The big picture: As with Kennedy's broader health care philosophy, the report blends mainstream ideas with highly controversial elements, including doubts about the current childhood vaccine schedule.

Here are the key takeaways:

1. Ultra-processed foods. The commission, in the first and longest section, acknowledges that popular snacks and beverages save Americans time and money, but cites research that suggests ultra-processed foods are linked to chronic diseases and says children need more "whole foods."
- "I think everybody wants to prioritize the ultra-processed food crisis and try to reduce our reliance on ultra-processed foods and try to improve the quality of the food," Kennedy said on Thursday.
2. Chemical exposures. Potential toxins in the environment are a big concern, but the Trump administration is treading lightly.
- Farm groups worried ahead of the report's release that it would target pesticides like glyphosate, which are widely used in agriculture.
- "American farmers rely on these products, and actions that further regulate or restrict crop protection tools beyond risk-based and scientific processes set forth by Congress must involve thoughtful consideration of what is necessary for adequate protection, alternatives, and cost of production," the report states.
3. More "gold-standard science." The report also portrays research on chemical exposure and chronic disease as a necessary competitive advantage for the U.S.
- Understanding potential links between chemical exposure and chronic illness "cannot happen through a European regulatory system that stifles growth," the report says. Rather, it should happen through science done by the federal government and "through unleashing private sector innovation."
4. Overuse of medicine. The commission calls out kids' "overmedicalization" — and continues to cast doubt on childhood vaccines.
- It cites a 1,400% increase in antidepressant prescriptions for American adolescents between 1987 and 2014, as well as increased prescribing of stimulants, antibiotics and asthma drugs.
- Long-term research on the impact of commonly used drugs for kids is limited, but there are "contributory human data that raise important questions" about antidepressants, stimulants and other treatments, the report says.

- › The commission also questions the current U.S. childhood vaccine protocol and says vaccines would benefit from "more rigorous clinical trial designs." Vaccines are already studied in large trials and subject to ongoing safety surveillance.
- 5. Corporate influence. The role of corporate interests features prominently in the report, despite assurances that it's not anti-industry.
- › Misaligned incentives in federal regulations and significant scientific funding from food, pharmaceutical, tech and chemical companies contribute to the rise of chronic disease, the report claims.
- Zoom in: The secretaries of agriculture, education and housing, as well as the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and other federal officials, sit on the 14-member commission.
- › White House deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller is a member, along with Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought, who co-authored the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025.
- What's next: The commission now has about 80 days to create a strategy for how the federal government should respond, per Trump's original February order.
- › Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said that updated dietary guidelines will likely be released before this fall.
- › "What you're going to see is a whole new day on dietary guidelines where federal nutrition advice will be sound. It will be simple, and it will be clear," Rollins said.

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# MAHA Commission Unveils Landmark Report Exposing Root Causes of Childhood Chronic Disease Crisis

**WASHINGTON, DC—May 22, 2025**—The Presidential Commission to Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) today released a groundbreaking assessment identifying key drivers behind the childhood chronic disease crisis. Coming just 98 days after President Trump signed an Executive Order <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/establishing-the-presidents-make-america-healthy-again-commission/> establishing the MAHA Commission and tasking it with delivering a “Make Our Children Healthy Again Assessment” <https://www.whitehouse.gov/maha/>,” the report exposes a range of contributing factors—including poor diet, accumulation of environmental toxins, insufficient physical activity, chronic stress, and overmedicalization.

By examining these drivers, the assessment arms MAHA Commission stakeholders and partners with clear evidence that will support the development of effective policy interventions where they can deliver the greatest impact.



“We will end the childhood chronic disease crisis by attacking its root causes head-on—not just managing its symptoms,” **said U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.** “We will follow the truth wherever it leads, uphold rigorous science, and drive bold policies that put the health, development, and future of every child first. I’m grateful to President Trump for his leadership—and for trusting me to lead this fight to root out corruption, restore scientific integrity, and reclaim the health of our children.”

“We must do more to improve the health outcomes of our kids and families, and President Trump knows agriculture is at the heart of the solution. America’s farmers and ranchers dedicate their lives to the noble cause of feeding their country and the world, and in doing so have created the safest and most abundant and affordable food supply in the world. We are working to make sure our kids and families are consuming the healthiest food we produce,” **said U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins.** “I look forward to continuing to work with Secretary Kennedy and other members of the MAHA Commission to improve our nation’s health.”

“America’s childhood chronic disease crisis will be solved through innovation,” **said U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin.** “At EPA, we will do our part to protect human health and the environment while fulfilling all of our statutory obligations to safely regulate chemicals needed for every part of modern life to transport, build, feed, and power the Great American Comeback. This report shows America will continue to be the energy, industrial, and agricultural power of the world—and we can continue this while ensuring we have the healthiest children.”

#### **The need for this report is clear:**

- Today in the U.S. more than 1 in 5 children over 6 years old are obese. This is a more than 270% increase compared to the 1970s.
- Prevalence of pre-diabetes in teens is more than 1 in 4 teens, having more than doubled over the last 2 decades.
- Childhood cancer incidence has risen over nearly 40% since 1975, especially in children aged 0-19.
- Autism spectrum disorder impacts 1 in 31 children by age 8.
- Teenage depression rates nearly doubled from 2009 to 2019, and with more than 1 in 4 teenage girls in 2022 reporting a major depressive episode in the past year.
- Three million high school students seriously considered suicide in 2023.
- Between 1997 and 2018, childhood food-allergy prevalence rose 88%.

Next steps will include supporting gold-standard scientific research and developing a comprehensive strategy. The MAHA commission now has 82 days to produce the Make Our Children Healthy Again Strategy, based on the findings from today’s assessment.

The National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services will act swiftly to close research gaps and drive decisive action against the escalating childhood chronic disease crisis. From overhauling GRAS oversight to harnessing AI for real-time surveillance

and tackling the replication crisis, these agencies are on the front lines. These agencies will lead the charge in ending the childhood chronic disease epidemic to Make America Healthy Again.

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