

## Smoke-free Policy

All NSW Health hospital campuses are in the process of implementing the NSW Health Smoke Free Workplace Policy. This Policy mandates that all hospital campuses under the control of NSW Health should be totally smoke-free.

### Why Smoke-free?

The prevalence of smoking among those with a mental illness is much higher than it is for the general population. In 2007, the New South Wales Population Health Survey showed that 18.6% of people reported current daily or occasional smoking (21.9% males; 15.3% females). In 2006 the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) indicated that 32% of adults who self reported mental or behavioural problems in the 2004-05 National Health Survey were current daily smokers.

Medical evidence has confirmed that tobacco smoking is detrimental to health by causing disease and ill health. Medical evidence has also highlighted the risks associated with the inhalation of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) or passive smoking. Although smoking is legal, health workers, mental health consumers and visitors are entitled to an environment where they are not exposed to passive smoking. There is no such thing as safe levels of exposure to second-hand cigarette smoke.

NSW Health has the aim of improving the health of all people in NSW and a responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all persons utilising its facilities and services. All healthcare consumers have the right to be treated in a

smoke-free environment and all employees have the right to work in a smoke-free workplace.

Implementation of smoke-free policies in mental healthcare facilities will provide support to address nicotine withdrawal symptoms for mental health consumers and for the staff that work in these facilities.

As well, implementing the Policy in mental healthcare facilities will assist to discourage tobacco use and offer consumers and staff the opportunity to consider quitting.

Implementing smoke-free mental healthcare facilities provides a safe environment where consumers can learn how smoking impacts on their lives, find resources and opportunities that will help them if they choose to quit and support their ability to manage their own physical wellness. By introducing a smoke-free policy, health services are not forcing consumers to quit. Mental health consumers may choose to resume smoking following discharge or continue to be a non-smoker. If you have any further questions or concerns, please ask to speak to a staff member at the health service you are involved with.

### How can we help you cope with not smoking?

Health services will help mental health consumers who smoke to manage nicotine withdrawal symptoms. This support is provided by assessing nicotine dependency, asking clients if they require assistance with withdrawal symptoms, offering nicotine



replacement therapies, reminding those clients who do not take up the offer that assistance is available and monitoring symptoms of nicotine withdrawal and any side effects.

The relationship between smoking and mental health problems is at times complex, and quitting smoking can be hard, but not impossible. In fact, the most common method of quitting is going 'cold turkey'. The evidence shows that people with a mental health problem can quit smoking and can do so safely.

### Symptoms of nicotine withdrawal

Withdrawal symptoms from nicotine consist of the presence of **cravings to smoke plus four or more** of the following:

- ♦ Anxiety
- ♦ Restlessness
- ♦ Difficulty concentrating
- ♦ Frustration or anger
- ♦ Increased appetite
- ♦ Insomnia (sleeplessness)
- ♦ Irritability
- ♦ Depressed mood
- ♦ Decreased Heart Rate

An important component to the success of any smoke-free policy is the availability of nicotine replacement therapy, more simply known as NRT. These include:

\* **Patch** – The nicotine patch is an adhesive patch that you wear on your skin. It slowly releases nicotine, which you absorb through your skin. The patch works by replacing some of the nicotine you normally inhale from cigarettes

\* **Gum** – Nicotine gum is available in 2mg and 4mg strengths. Nicotine gum is not to be chewed like regular gum, but used as an oral patch

\* **Lozenge** – This product works in the same way as nicotine gum; the nicotine is absorbed into the bloodstream through the lining of the mouth.

\* **Inhaler** – This device consists of a plastic mouthpiece and cartridge containing a dose equivalent to 2mg of nicotine.

While in hospital a program can be tailored to your individual needs to assist you to give up smoking. Ask staff for help.

Support is also available after discharge. Hunter New England Health are currently providing free NRT to all community mental health and community Drug & Alcohol clients. If you are a client of a community team, ask your care coordinator about access to free NRT.

The types of NRT you can access for free include:

- ✓ 4mg gum
- ✓ 4mg lozenge
- ✓ Nicorette inhaler starter pack
- ✓ 21mg patch

In addition, NSW Health introduced a fax referral system to the Quitline throughout all NSW health services in 2004. Smokers wanting assistance to quit can sign a fax form during a consultation with their health professional, which is then faxed to the Quitline, and a counsellor will call the person at the designated time to provide support.



Myths / Facts	
Quitting will make my mental illness worse.	Smoking causes stress, anxiety and depression actually making you feel worse.
Quitting will make me angry, violent, or in a bad mood	Quitting smoking will not make you more violent. Any bad moods or anger relate to nicotine withdrawal and will get better quickly. NRT like nicotine patches, gum, or inhalers will also help.
Consumers sometimes ask family and friends to smuggle cigarettes into the hospital	It is best if family and friends are able to say they are not allowed to bring cigarettes into the hospital. If this is too hard ask a staff member for help.
Smoking helps my stress.	Thinking you 'feel better' after a smoke relates to your addiction to nicotine. Sometimes people feel stressed because their body is craving nicotine and having a cigarette provides it.
I feel in control when I smoke	Smoking is an addiction that controls people. Many people who quit say they feel more in control of their life after quitting.

Call **Quitline on 137848** or visit [www.quitnow.info.au](http://www.quitnow.info.au) or [www.13quit.org.au](http://www.13quit.org.au).

More information about smoking and its effects on mental and physical health and wellbeing:

**Oxygen**  
[www.oxygen.org.au](http://www.oxygen.org.au)

**Outsmart cigarettes**  
[www.outsmartcigarettes.com.au](http://www.outsmartcigarettes.com.au)

**Cancer Institute NSW**  
[www.cancerinstitute.org.au/cancer\\_inst/.../friend](http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au/cancer_inst/.../friend)

**NSW Department of Health**  
[www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/health.../tobacco](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/health.../tobacco)