

WHY ADDRESSING SMOKING IS IMPORTANT FOR INPATIENTS

Information for families, friends and carers

Smoking not only affects a person's health, it affects their financial and material wellbeing, as well as their personal life and the health of those around them.

Smoking causes increased stress, anxiety and depression and is linked with worsening mental health.

Rates of smoking in the general population is just under 17% however for people with a Mental Illness the rate is as high as 32% and for those with a serious mental illness such as Schizophrenia the rate is around 62%.

Evidence and experience shows that people with a mental illness want to quit smoking and it is safe to do so.

Emergency contacts

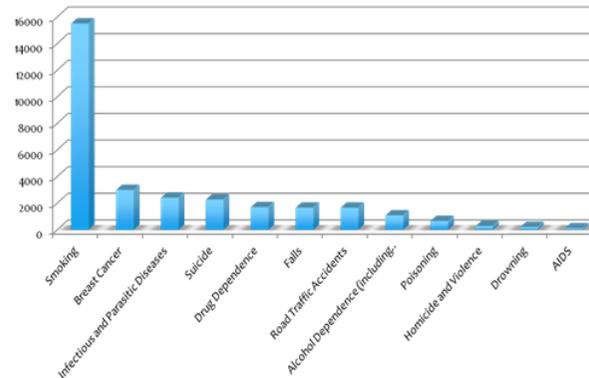
If you or another person is in immediate **physical danger** contact the Police directly. Phone: 000

If someone requires **emergency medical attention** contact the Ambulance service directly. Phone: 000

For urgent **Mental Health Advice** phone: 1800 011 511

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death, illness and disability in Australia killing 15,000 people per year more than outweighing death from Suicide (2,279), Substance Use (1,705) and Alcohol Dependence (1,084).

Tobacco-related deaths within Australia
Compared with other Causes – 2003



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Smoking in Mental Health

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Version Issued: 09/12
Document owner: Manager Nursing Services

Smoking in Mental Health

Why do People Smoke?

Smokers become dependent (addicted) to the nicotine in cigarettes. Smoking a cigarette releases a burst of nicotine which in turn stimulates the brain to produce dopamine. Dopamine produces feelings of pleasure and quickly leads to a regular pattern of smoking. Soon smokers need increasing amounts of nicotine to feel 'normal'.

Shortly after smoking a cigarette nicotine levels fall in the blood causing the person to crave a cigarette. This craving causes the smoker to feel stressed until they have a cigarette. Often smokers will mistake the relief they feel by satisfying their craving as meaning smoking is calming/soothing/relaxing when in reality *smoking is just relieving symptoms of nicotine withdrawal.*

Why do people with a mental illness smoke at a higher rate?

People with a mental health problem smoke for the same reason anybody else does – it's addictive. Unfortunately, historically in mental health services a culture of smoking has been accepted, sometimes encouraged and most often times ignored. There has been an assumption that it is too hard for people with a mental health problem to quit so they haven't been provided with the opportunity. However people with a mental health problem can successfully quit and need to be encouraged to do so.

Smoking Re-Enforces Social Disadvantage

Smoking costs financially, a pack a day habit can cost more than \$70 per week adding up to more than \$3640 per year.

Spending money on smoking leaves less money for food, clothing and housing, some people on low incomes will forgo food for cigarettes.

Giving up smoking reduces financial stress and improves standards of living.

Smoking is becoming more and more socially

unacceptable and people are less tolerant of people smoking. There are less and less places where you can smoke increasing social isolation.

Benefits of Not Smoking

Quitting Smoking is the best way to improve a person's physical health. Within 12 hours of stopping the carbon monoxide level in the blood drops to normal and oxygen levels increase. After 2 to 12 weeks the risk of heart attack begins to drop, circulation improves, exercise is easier and lung function improves. In 1 year the risks of heart disease drops by half, in five years the risk of cancer of the mouth, throat and esophagus is halved and the risk of stroke is dramatically reduced.

Quitting Smoking is one of the best ways to increase a person's financial security.

Quitting smoking increases the chances of abstaining from other substances as well. Research and experience has shown that stopping smoking helps people abstain from other substances.

Quitting smoking helps stabilize medications. The chemicals in cigarettes decrease the effectiveness of many mental health medications. This means some people who smoke need greater doses and this can increase the chance of side effects from these medications. Quitting Smoking has been shown to decrease stress and anxiety as well as reduce depression. Smokers experience constant withdrawals throughout the day which can exacerbate psychological distress in mentally unwell people.

Is it safe to Quit Smoking when Acutely Mentally Unwell?

There is no evidence that by stopping smoking when Acutely Mentally Unwell symptoms of mental illness worsen. Research and experience has shown no change for people with psychosis/schizophrenia. There is also no risk of worsening depression for those who suffer depression. On the contrary evidence shows mental health improves by quitting smoking.

How does Nicotine Replacement Work?

Nicotine dependence from smoking cigarettes produces well defined withdrawal symptoms that can be effectively eased by using Nicotine Replacement Therapy.

The use of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (24hour patches, gum, lozenges, inhalers) when used consistently and in enough quantities do reduce nicotine withdrawals and is proven to work effectively for people with a mental illness.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy is prescribed for all patients who smoke. Patients are encouraged to put on a 24hour patch early in the morning and use either gum, lozenges and/or inhalers as required throughout the day. Some patient's may require two patches depending on how much they usually smoke.

Patients are further supported by receiving supportive counseling by staff individually and in groups.

What can you do to Support Patients?

- Encourage them to regularly use NRT. When escorting them on leave ask the staff about taking supplementary NRT with you.
- Do not give patient's cigarettes to bring back to the ward. Patients with cigarettes are at risk of bullying from other patients for cigarettes also intermittent smoking exacerbates withdrawals increasing their agitation.
- Advise them of the benefits of not smoking e.g. the benefits to their physical health, the financial benefits, the benefits to their mental health.
- Do not smoke around patients while you are escorting patients on leave.

