

News

NICE issues guidance on smoking cessation and physical activity

Smoking cessation

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has issued a new guidance on interventions and referral for smoking cessation. The guidance includes the following recommendations:

- Everyone who smokes should be advised to quit, unless there are exceptional circumstances. People who are not ready to quit should be asked to consider the possibility and be encouraged to seek help in the future.
- People who smoke should be asked how interested they are in quitting. Advice to stop smoking should be sensitive to the individual's preferences, needs and circumstances.
- GPs should take the opportunity to advise all patients who smoke to quit when they attend a consultation. Those who want to stop should be offered a referral to an intensive support service (for example, NHS Stop Smoking Services). If they

are unwilling or unable to accept this referral, they should be offered pharmacotherapy and additional support. The smoking status of those who are not ready to stop should be recorded and reviewed with the individual once a year, where possible.

- Nurses in primary and community care and all other health professionals such as hospital clinicians, pharmacists and dentists, and community workers, should also refer people who smoke to an intensive support service.
- Smoking cessation advice and support should be available in community, primary and secondary care settings for everyone who smokes. Local policy makers and commissioners should target hard to reach deprived communities, including minority ethnic groups, paying particular attention to their needs.
- Monitoring systems should be set up to ensure health professionals have access to

information on the current smoking status of their patients.

Physical activity

NICE has released a guidance aiming to identify and change factors that influence activity levels in the general public.

Recommendations include the following:

- Primary care practitioners should identify inactive adults and advise them to aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity on five days of the week. They should use a validated tool, such as the Department of Health's forthcoming general practitioner physical activity questionnaire, to identify inactive individuals.
- When providing physical activity advice, primary care practitioners should take into account the individual's needs, preferences and circumstances. They should agree goals with them. They should also provide written information about the benefits of activity and the local

opportunities to be active. They should follow them up at appropriate intervals over a three to six month period.

- Local policy makers, commissioners and managers, together with primary care practitioners, should monitor the effectiveness of local strategies and systems to promote physical activity. They should focus, in particular, on whether opportunistic advice is helping to increase the physical activity levels of people from disadvantaged groups, including those with disabilities.

They should also assess how effective professionals from a range of disciplines are at raising long-term physical activity levels among these groups.

- Practitioners, policy makers and commissioners should only endorse exercise referral schemes, pedometers and walking and cycling schemes to promote physical activity that are part of a properly designed and controlled research study to determine effectiveness.

World Heart Day to focus on diet and exercise for a 'young' heart

This year's World Heart Day on 24th September, 2006 will highlight that a low calorie, nutritionally balanced diet is associated with slowing the ageing process of the heart. Its campaign will ask 'How young is your heart?'.

"It's almost an obsession in many societies to look as youthful as possible, but we should really be thinking about the age of our heart," said Professor Valentin Fuster, President of the World Heart

Federation, which runs World Heart Day. The day will also highlight the importance of physical activity in preventing the ageing of the heart, showing how the hearts of veteran athletes aged 50–70 years have been found to be as strong and healthy as those of an inactive 20-year-old.

- Activities taking place for World Heart Day can be found on www.worldheartday.com