

## Principles of care

- 1 Mental health consumers are entitled to quality, evidence based care and treatment for all aspects of their health, including their physical health.
- 2 Such care and treatment for mental health consumers:
  - Is delivered in a respectful, non-judgemental and culturally sensitive way, with information about their illness, physical condition and treatment options provided to enable them to make informed choices;
  - Recognises consumers as critical partners in the care team;
  - Involves their families and carers, with the consent, wherever possible, of consumers.
- 3 The physical health of mental health consumers is considered by mental health services in the planning and provision of any mental health interventions.
- 4 Working collaboratively with other health providers, particularly GPs, is key to providing quality physical health care for mental health consumers.
- 5 Physical health care includes access to health promotion, screening and preventative activities.
- 6 The provision of physical health care is responsive to issues such as consumer preferences, gender, ethnicity, English proficiency and age.

Linking  
physical and mental  
health care...  
it makes sense

## Need more information?

- ✓ Speak to your local mental health service
- ✓ See your regular GP
- ✓ For culturally and linguistically relevant mental health information or to order a copy of this information sheet contact the Transcultural Mental Health Centre (Transcultural Mental Health Centre) by phone on 1800 64 89 11 or via their website at [www.dhi.health.nsw.gov.au/tmhc](http://www.dhi.health.nsw.gov.au/tmhc)

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# Physical health care

## What to expect from your Mental Health Service



All NSW mental health services have a responsibility to ensure that the people who use their service receive adequate physical health care. This brochure provides a broad outline of these responsibilities and how they will be met.

### **Making sure you receive a physical health examination**

A regular physical examination is very important to identify physical health issues and start treatment as soon as possible.

Mental health services have an obligation to make sure that consumers receive an initial examination within 24 hours of admission to an inpatient unit or within one month of admission to a community service.

This can be carried out by the mental health service or by your GP. After this, an examination is required at least annually.

### **Ruling out any physical causes for your mental illness or disorder**

Sometimes the symptoms of a physical illness can appear the same as the symptoms of a mental illness, or can mask them.

A physical health examination will help your mental health service make sure that you receive the right care and treatment for your illness – whether it's cause is of a physical or a mental nature, or both.

### **Linking you with a local GP if required and assisting with appointments**

Having a regular GP that you can get to easily is important in helping you improve your physical health.

Your mental health service will be building or strengthening their relationship with local GPs so they can put you in contact with a GP that is experienced with or interested in mental health.

They will also offer to call your GP to make an appointment for you and organise transport if required.

### **Considering how the treatment for your mental illness will affect your physical health**

The medication for your mental illness may have side effects that make your physical health deteriorate. By regularly monitoring your physical health, you will help your mental health service to identify side effects as early as possible.

### **Putting you in contact with other health providers for health reviews or tests when your symptoms make this necessary**

By having regular physical examinations, you will help your mental health service to determine what further tests or treatment you might need. The service will also work closely with your GP, with your consent, so that you are referred to the most appropriate health providers as required.

### **Ensuring that your care plans and rehabilitation and recovery programs address your mental and physical health needs, as well as your ongoing health issues**

Physical and mental health are closely linked, which means it's important that all recovery and treatment plans for you take account of both your physical and mental health needs. Mental health services will ensure this occurs.

### **Helping you to attend activities, such as yoga or Pilates, which will help to improve your physical health and wellbeing**

Mental health services have an important role to play in encouraging consumers to get involved in physical activities that will improve their physical health.

Exercise is a key component in improving your mental and physical health as well as your general well-being.

### **Giving you information and advice about how to improve your physical health, such as advice on your diet or how to give up smoking**

Health promotion information on topics such as quitting smoking, diet and nutrition and weight control can help you to educate yourself about caring for your physical health.

Your mental health service will ensure that a range of information about relevant health related topics is available to you when you need it.

### **Working with you to follow up identified physical health care needs and determining the best treatment**

You need to be an active participant in your own physical health care - so you can determine your own health outcomes, be involved in and, as much as is practical or possible, make decisions about, your own care.

Your mental health service will support you to receive advice about your health issues, and help you to assess the benefit of different treatment options if required.

### **Providing you and your family, where appropriate, with information at discharge to support you to manage any physical health issues or concerns**

Inpatient mental health services are required to develop a Discharge Care Plan to support consumers to manage once they leave the service. This Plan will include information to help you with your physical as well as your mental health issues.

All other services will provide you with general information and contacts that will assist you in addressing your physical health needs.

