What's new?

NICE published two pieces of public health guidance during May and June 2013:

- Physical activity: brief advice for adults in primary care
  http://guidance.nice.org.uk/PH44
- Tobacco harm reduction http://guidance.nice.org.uk/PH45

These are summarized in this update.

Also, following the establishment of the new public health responsibilities within local authorities, NICE has been referred an initial programme of quality standards for public health. NICE will develop new quality standards on reducing tobacco use in the community, preventing harmful alcohol use, and strategies to prevent obesity in adults and children.

Physical activity: brief advice for adults in primary care

This guidance aims to support routine provision of brief advice on physical activity in primary care practice.

You can view the full physical activity pathway at http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/physical-activity

The guidance is for commissioners of health services and anyone working in primary care whose remit includes offering lifestyle advice. These include exercise professionals, GPs, health trainers, health visitors, mental health professionals, midwives, pharmacists, practice nurses and physiotherapists.

The new guidance recommends that primary care practitioners should:

- Identify adults who are not currently meeting the UK Chief Medical Officers’ physical activity guidelines. This could be done during a consultation or as part of a planned session on management of long-term conditions.
- Not rely on visual clues such as body weight to identify adults who are inactive, but use a questionnaire that has been shown to be accurate (such as the GP Physical Activity Questionnaire) to assess physical activity levels.
- Encourage adults who have been assessed as being inactive to do more physical activity.
- Provide information on local opportunities to be physically active for people with a range of abilities, preferences and needs.

The recommendations also cover the integration of physical activity into the Care Pathway of conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and stroke, and also into services for groups that are likely to be inactive, such as those aged 65 and over, those with a disability, and people from specific ethnic groups.

Tobacco: harm reduction

This guidance is for commissioners, managers and practitioners with public health as part of their remit, organizations that provide education and training, manufacturers and retailers of licensed nicotine-containing products.

It is especially aimed at those involved in providing advice on stopping smoking, including those working in smoking cessation services.

Nicotine inhaled from smoking tobacco is highly addictive. But it is primarily the toxins and carcinogens in tobacco smoke—not the nicotine—that cause illness and death. The best way to reduce these illnesses and deaths is to stop smoking — ideally, stopping in one step (sometimes called ‘abrupt quitting’).

However, there are other ways of reducing the harm from smoking, even though this may involve continued use of nicotine. This guidance is about helping people, particularly those who are highly dependent on nicotine, who:

- May not be able (do not want) to stop smoking in one step
- May want to stop smoking, without necessarily giving up nicotine
- May not be ready to stop smoking but want to reduce the amount they smoke

Amanda Killoran, Public health principal, Richmond secondment
James Jagroo, Analyst
Hilary Chatterton, Analyst
Simon Ellis, Associate Director
The guidance recommends harm-reduction approaches, which may or may not include temporary or long-term use of licensed nicotine-containing products.

The recommendations cover awareness-raising, advising on, providing and selling licensed nicotine-containing products; self-help materials; behavioural support; and education and training for practitioners.

This guidance does not cover ‘reduced exposure cigarettes’, ‘smokeless tobacco’ or any other products containing tobacco. In addition, it does not provide advice for women who are pregnant or maternity services.

You can view the full smoking pathway focusing on harm reduction at http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/smoking-tobacco-harm-reduction-approaches