

Helping people with a mental illness quit smoking

People with mental health problems who also smoke need targeted support to help them quit, says the Health Development Agency (HDA). The new HDA booklet '*Smoking and patients with mental health problems*,' has been developed to provide advice on how to reach and support people with a mental health problem who smoke. The guide aims to be of use to professionals who work with people with mental health problems.

Smoking prevalence is very high among people with mental health problems yet for the many who reportedly do wish to stop it appears there is little advice and support available.

It is not yet fully understood why people with mental health problems smoke more. However the guide provides evidence that, for some illnesses, nicotine through smoking is used as self-medication. Smoking may also help alleviate some side effects associated with antipsychotic medication. Consumers also report that boredom is a key factor in their heavy smoking.

The guide highlights the fact that those working with mental health consumers do not always consider smoking cessation an important issue. This is consistent with other reports that the poor physical health of mental health consumers does not receive the attention it warrants.

A number of key ways to assist people with a mental health problem reduce or cease smoking have been outlined in the guide. The document suggests that those working with mental health consumers should raise the issues with their clients so that those who want to quit can be offered the support they need

To access the guide in full please visit the Health Development Agency website
http://www.hda-online.org.uk/Documents/smoking_mentalhealth.pdf