



Why this is important for you?

Mental health is a priority area across Great Britain. In the UK 1 in 4 adults experience at least one diagnosable mental health problem in any one year. The total cost of mental illness in England adds up to £77.4 billion per year. Mental health is central to all health and well-being since how we think and feel has a strong impact on physical health. Pharmacy is ideally placed to promote good mental health and support people with mental illness.

Who should take action?

- Pharmacists and pharmacy staff who promote physical and mental well-being and provide pharmacy services.
- Anyone who requires an overview on pharmacy and mental health.

“A toolkit to support the integration of pharmacy into care pathways for mental health in primary care” includes detailed information, for pharmacists and those who plan/commission services, about levels of pharmaceutical care services.

What this guidance will tell you?

- Tips for mental well-being. How to raise awareness of good mental health and promote healthy lifestyles.
- Pharmaceutical care in mental illness.
- Identifying people at risk of mental illness requiring referral.
- Where to signpost people to for additional support and information.
- Links to articles - practice guidance on depression, sleep disorders, dementia, bipolar affective disorder, schizophrenia.

Key points

- You can minimise the stigma and negative attitudes associated with mental illness by raising awareness of mental health conditions and improving patient and carer information.
- Severe mental illness is associated with a 10-year reduction in life expectancy due to physical health problems (including obesity, diabetes and cardiac disease). Smoking, alcohol and drug misuse is more common in people with mental illness. Pharmacies can offer services to promote healthy lifestyles e.g. smoking cessation.
- Underlying mental health problems can cause sleep disorders. Lack of sleep can impact on mental health. Advice on good “sleep hygiene” can help improve sleep quality:
- Try to unwind and relax before bedtime
- Take light exercise each day, avoid vigorous exercise close to bedtime
- Avoid caffeine (tea, coffee, cola) and rich/spicy foods before bedtime
- Ensure the bedroom is comfortable (not too hot,cold,noisy or bright)
- Avoid napping during the day
- Organise successful health promotion events by linking in with national and international mental health campaigns.

How do we define mental health?

Definitions include: “Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (WHO).

Why is good practice important in this area?

Pharmacies are readily accessible to the public and can display leaflets and posters to raise awareness and reduce stigma. Pharmacists can provide opportunistic advice and signposting e.g. people purchasing St John’s wort for depression. Pharmacists may wish to provide mental health services above core contractual services – see the Mental Health toolkit on our website.

When might pharmacists provide pharmaceutical care in mental illness?

- Pharmacists can make a significant contribution to the management of psychiatric and other medicines and can help increase medicines adherence.
- Steps that can be taken to improve pharmaceutical care services include repeat dispensing systems, individualised patient

information and appropriate use of monitored dosage systems.

- Pharmacists can provide training and support for care home staff on medicines issues.
- The role of pharmacy in relation to specific safety issues, e.g. the overprescribing of antipsychotics in dementia, has been highlighted.

What can pharmacists do about promoting good mental health and healthy lifestyles?

There are simple steps people can take to maintain their mental well-being. Everyone has mental health needs.

Tips for mental well-being:

- Keep physically active
- Eat well
- Drink alcohol in moderation
- Value yourself and others
- Talk about your feelings
- Keep in touch with friends/family
- Care for others
- Get involved, make a contribution
- Learn a new skill
- Do something creative
- Take a break
- Ask for help

Pharmacy staff can provide advice on healthy lifestyles:

- healthy eating – eat 5 pieces of fruit and vegetables a day
- smoking cessation,
- stress management,
- exercise – ideally exercise for 30 minutes a day five or more times a week
- drinking alcohol in moderation – maximum 3/4 units per day for men and 2/3 units per day for women

In addition, pharmacists as employers, can develop well-being policies for their staff.

When should I refer the patient?

People are more likely to experience mental health problems if they are unemployed, have a chronic physical health condition or have experienced adverse life events such as a relationship breakdown or bereavement. Signpost people at risk to support groups. Pharmacists may recognise the symptoms of mental illness or signs of relapse and refer.

What other services are available for people for whom mental illness is an issue?

Carers looking after someone (e.g. a relative with dementia) may especially need support and respite. People may also require help with finances, accommodation and emotional problems. Community mental health teams can help take care of medical and social needs. Charities and patient organisations also provide support and advice.

Where to go for more information:

RPS Support: 0845 257 2570
Email: support@rpharms.com