Chapter 2: Healthy living and health risks

Smoking

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Key messages

- The harms of smoking and the benefits of smoking cessation are well established.[1]
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smoking prevalence is high, but is decreasing.[2]
- Health practitioners play an important role in supporting public health approaches to reduce smoking prevalence by delivering screening, medications and behavioural support for smoking cessation.[3]
- There is strong support for more culturally appropriate approaches to smoking prevention and cessation.[4]
- Although culturally adapted smoking cessation services are preferred, other services are also effective and can be recommended.[4]
- There is strong evidence for behavioural support and use of medications to support cessation among adults.[5]

Recommendations

Who/target population	What	When	Strength of recommendation	Key source(s) and reference(s)
Preventive activity: Screening				
People aged 10 years and over	Ask all patients if they smoke tobacco and record/update smoking status in their clinical record	Opportunistically Review smoking status at least annually for people who smoke or who have recently quit	Strong	National guideline[3]
Parents and carers of children aged 15 years and under	Ask parents and carers if they smoke, and smoke inside the home or car, and advise about harms of second-hand smoke to children	Opportunistically	Good practice point	National guideline[3]

Recommendations

Who/target population	What	When	Strength of recommendation	Key source(s) and reference(s)
Preventive activity: Behavioural				
Adults who smoke	Advise all adults who smoke to quit and on the most effective methods to quit	Opportunistically, whenever possible	Strong	National guideline[3]
Young people aged 11–17 years	Advise all young people who do not smoke to not start smoking There is insufficient evidence to recommend behavioural cessation support to young people	Opportunistically	Strong	National guideline[3]
Adults who smoke	Help adults to quit by recommending multi-session behavioural support using individual or group counselling, Quitline, text messaging (eg QuitTxt), internet programs (eg QuitCoach or iCanQuit) or incentives for cessation support	Opportunistically following brief advice	Strong	National guideline[3]
Preventive activity: Medication				
Non-pregnant adults who smoke	Help non-pregnant adults to quit by recommending smoking cessation pharmacotherapies If nicotine-dependent, the most effective pharmacotherapies are combination nicotine replacement therapy (NRT; patch and oral) and varenicline; single-form NRT and bupropion are also effective	Opportunistically following brief advice	Strong	National guideline[3]
Non-pregnant adults who smoke	If the above pharmacotherapies are unsuccessful, consider the use of nicotine e-cigarettes after discussion of the lack of information about the long term risks of e-cigarettes	After unsuccessful use of other smoking cessation pharmacotherapies	Conditional	National guideline[3]
Pregnant and breastfeeding women who smoke	If behavioural support is not successful, consider NRT after explaining the risks and benefits. Intermittent use formulations such as gum, lozenges, inhaler or tablets rather than continuous use patches are preferred. **Do not** use varenicline or bupropion in pregnant or breastfeeding women	At each pregnancy care visit	Conditional	National guideline[3]

Recommendations

Who/target population	What	When	Strength of recommendation	Key source(s) and reference(s)
Preventive activity: Medication (continued)				
Young people aged under 18 years who smoke	There is insufficient evidence to recommend the use of NRT in children and young people aged under 18 years who smoke **Do not** use varenicline or bupropion in people aged under 18 years	N/A	Good practice point	Systematic review[6]
Preventive activity: Environmental				
All people	Complement the above individual-based preventive activities with support for comprehensive public health approaches to smoking prevention; for example: • marketing and messaging, including posters and displays at the health service, community organisations and events • smoke-free rules at the health service, community organisations and events, and smoke-free homes and cars • restricting the activities of the tobacco industry	Opportunistically	Strong	National strategy[7]

Implementation tips

- Ensure training and systems to support the AAH (Ask, Advise, Help) approach to smoking cessation:
  - ensure smoking status is recorded and updated in the patient's medical record (Ask)
  - ensure staff are trained in brief advice and pathways for referral for behavioural support and medication (Advise and Help).
- Use Australian guidelines to ensure the appropriate use of smoking cessation medication.[3]
- Use the tobacco control continuous quality improvement guide to improve the comprehensive approach to tobacco control at the health service (see Useful resources).[8]
- Support and do not stigmatise people who smoke; the blame lies with transnational tobacco corporations, which have promoted, manipulated and profited from this product they know kills millions every year.

Useful resources

Clinical guidelines

- RACGP: *Supporting smoking cessation: A guide for health professionals* – Australian guidelines for smoking cessation (last updated in 2021) racgp.link/4e29kNz

Other resources for health professionals

- Tackling Indigenous Smoking Resource and Information Centre: detailed information on tobacco control resources, publications, programs and projects for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities racgp.link/3Zwelo1
- Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory: *The Tobacco Control Guide* – a continuous quality improvement guide to improve the comprehensive approach to tobacco control in health services racgp.link/3B6oNO7
- Australian Government smoking, tobacco and vaping website: provides quitting information, apps, factsheets and details of media campaigns, including specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources racgp.link/47xiMWP
- Cancer Council Victoria: *Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues* – a regularly updated comprehensive review of the major issues in smoking and health in Australia racgp.link/4do8Pwt

Patient resources

- Quitline: telephone 13 7848 or 13QUIT or go online (racgp.link/47rhiNW) to arrange a free call back and follow-up telephone calls
- QuitTxt: behavioural support to quit by text messages www.quitcoach.org.au/QuitTextInformation.aspx
- QuitCoach: personalised behavioural support from the internet, supported by Quit Victoria racgp.link/4e9TKzB
- iCanQuit: behavioural support from the internet, supported by the New South Wales Government racgp.link/4e55Gm3
- iSISTAQUIT: resources to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pregnant women to quit smoking racgp.link/47q0wyJ

References

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