Smoking: harm reduction

Information for the public
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About this information

NICE quality standards help to improve key areas of health or social care so that people are offered the best services, care and support available.

This information describes what the NICE quality standard for reducing harm from smoking says.

Reducing harm from smoking

The quality standard for reducing harm from smoking is made up of 4 statements, which set out what organisations (such as primary and secondary healthcare providers, pharmacies and 'stop smoking' services) should do to help improve people's health and wellbeing and prevent illness.

1. People who smoke but aren't ready or don't want to quit are offered ways to reduce their harm from smoking that don't necessarily mean having to give up nicotine. These are called 'harm-reduction approaches', and include things like cutting down, using licensed nicotine-containing products (such as patches, gum and tablets) and stopping smoking for a while.

2. People who aren't ready or don't want to quit smoking are advised that nicotine isn't the primary cause of health problems associated with smoking.

3. People who aren't ready or don't want to quit smoking get advice about using nicotine-containing products as a way of reducing the harm from smoking, both for them and for those around them. They are also helped to get hold of licensed nicotine-containing products – for example, by being prescribed these products or being told where they can buy them.
4. People who use 'stop smoking' services have the option of harm-reduction approaches if they don't think they can quit smoking in one step or don't want to quit.

Your care

NICE has produced advice and quality standards on improving the experience of care for adults using the NHS, which you might like to read.

We also have more information on the NICE website about using health and social care services.

More information on reducing harm from smoking

NICE has also produced guidance (advice) on tobacco: harm-reduction approaches to smoking. The guidance was used to develop this quality standard.

Sources of advice and information on reducing harm from smoking

- Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), 020 7404 0242
  www.ash.org.uk
- British Lung Foundation, 03000 030 555
  www.blf.org.uk
- NHS Go Smokefree, 0800 169 0169
  www.nhs.uk/smokefree
- QUIT, 0207 553 2100
  www.quit.org.uk

You can also go to NHS Choices for more information about health and social care.

A number of organisations who share NICE's commitment to improving quality in this area formally support this quality standard. They may also be able to provide advice and support. For a list of these organisations see the Smoking: harm reduction quality standard overview.

NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

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Accreditation