

MENTAL ILLNESS & SMOKING



Key Messages for Patients and the Public

Overview

People living with mental illness are more likely to smoke and be at greater risk for smoking-related health problems than the general population.¹ Smoking can affect the brain and body just like other drugs. Smoking also affects the way medications work. It's important for patients who take medications for mental health problems to talk with their health care providers about how much they smoke and to let them know if they stop smoking.

Smoking and Mental Illness

- People who live with a psychiatric disorder or a substance use disorder are 2-4 times more likely to smoke than the general population. 1 Up to 88% of people with schizophrenia 2 and 83% of people with bipolar disorder smoke.³
- Smoking affects the way some anti-psychotic and anti-depressant medications are broken down by the body. People who smoke heavily may need higher doses of medication than those who do not smoke.^{2,4,5}
- People who take medications for their illness need to work closely with health care providers when they reduce or stop smoking altogether because they may need to adjust doses of their medications in order to prevent toxicity or side effects.^{2,6,9}
- Smoking can provide relief from some of the symptoms of attention hyperactivity disorder, depression, schizophrenia and the side effects of some anti-psychotic medications, but smoking has not been proven as an effective adjunctive therapy for such disorders. Smoking has been shown to increase risk of more serious health problems, including the deterioration of both physical and mental health status.^{2,4,5-8}
- People who quit smoking may improve their health almost immediately and save money on medications.²
- Patients living with mental health and/or substance use disorders who smoke can get help by talking with a health care provider no matter their stage of change.
- Patients living with mental health and/or substance use disorders are able to quit smoking with support. They can benefit from evidence-based smoking cessation medications and behaviour counselling approaches.^{9,10,11}

Helpful Resources

- The CAMH (Center for Addiction and Mental Health) Nicotine Dependence Service www.camh.net
- Smokers' Helpline www.smokershelpline.ca (1 877 513-5333)
- Tobacco Treatment for Persons with Substance Use Disorders <http://smokingcessationleadership.ucsf.edu/Downloads/Stepsudtoolkit.pdf>

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