

# THE BEST WAY TO AVOID ILLNESSES IS TO STOP THEM BEFORE THEY START

Taking action early can prevent illnesses occurring later in life. This is true for everyone, but is especially important for people who experience psychosis.

WHY?

Because people who experience psychosis can be...

- Expected to live 15-20 years less than people without psychosis. This is mostly due to serious physical illnesses occurring at a younger age
- Twice as likely to become obese or overweight
- 2-3 times more likely to suffer a heart attack or stroke
- 2-3 times more likely to develop diabetes

- This is why your health team will encourage you to be active, eat healthily and stop smoking.
- It's also why they need to monitor your weight, check your blood pressure, and test your blood for diabetes and excess fats. These simple tests allow them to find out if you need extra help and if so, offer it as early as possible.

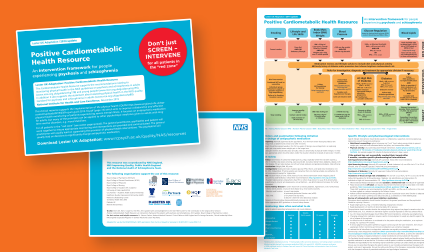
**Your mental health team and GP are here to help you. Work with them to lower your risk of physical illness and take control of your future health.**

MY HEALTH • MY CHOICE • MY RIGHT  
RIGHT FROM THE START OF PSYCHOSIS

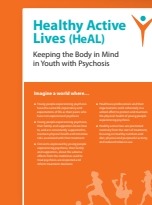
LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

For health professionals in your mental health team and GP surgery.

Recommended guidance on how to promote and monitor the physical health of people with psychosis:



**The Lester Resource – 2014 update:**  
NICE endorsed physical health framework with target values, monitoring schedules and intervention strategies.  
[www.rcpsych.ac.uk/qualityNAS/resources](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/qualityNAS/resources)



**Healthy Active Lives (HeAL, 2013):**  
An international consensus to protect peoples' physical health from the start of psychosis and its treatment.  
[www.iphys.org.au](http://www.iphys.org.au)

Dear Health Professional,  
I want to take steps to live a healthier life. Can you help me?  
I understand that experiencing psychosis puts me at greater risk of illnesses like heart attacks, strokes and diabetes. Could we work together to reduce these risks and start protecting my health right now?  
Thank you,  
Signed \_\_\_\_\_

For more information please contact your care team, for more leaflets the Psychosis Research Unit (PRU), [info@psychosisresearch.com](mailto:info@psychosisresearch.com), tel. 0161 358 1395.  
Service users and practitioners from Greater Manchester West Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust ([www.gmw.nhs.uk](http://www.gmw.nhs.uk)) developed this leaflet together as a way of empowering service users to improve the quality of care they receive.

**PRU** PSYCHOSIS RESEARCH UNIT

Greater Manchester West **NHS**  
Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

RFTS March 2016

# Right from the Start

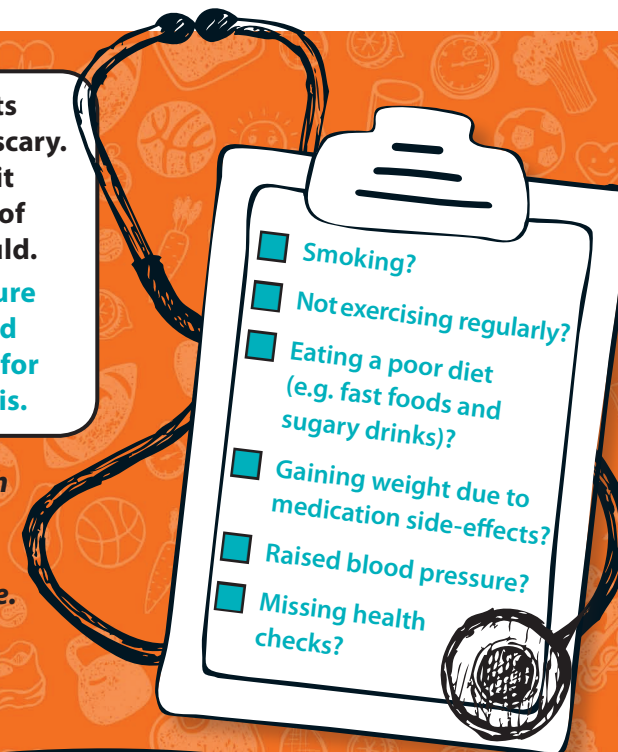
Keeping Your Body in Mind

A guide for people experiencing psychosis for the first time and those who care for them



Experiencing psychosis and its treatment for the first time is scary. Because of this you may find it difficult to take as much care of your body as you usually would. Unfortunately, the risk of future illnesses like heart attacks and diabetes can be much higher for people experiencing psychosis.

*"Improving my physical health has improved my mental health, which then improved my physical health even more. The two are definitely tied."*  
Phil, aged 20, an expert by experience



Don't leave physical health to chance:  
FIND OUT HOW YOUR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS CAN SUPPORT YOU



# FOUR EASY WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE RIGHT FROM THE START

It's important to ask your health professional about your overall health, not just your psychosis. Not sure how to start? Here are a few ideas. There's space for you to add your own, too.



## BE ACTIVE AND EAT A BALANCED DIET

- ☐ What's the best way to introduce exercise into my routine?
- ☐ How can I learn about eating and drinking healthily?
- ☐ What simple practical steps can I take right now?
- ☐ Can I make healthy choices on a tight budget?
- ☐ What can I do to improve poor sleep?
- ☐ If I'm ready to stop or reduce smoking, how can I get help?
- ☐ And what about \_\_\_\_\_?



## BE PROACTIVE IN GETTING THE RIGHT TREATMENT

- ☐ Can you tell me more about my medication?
  - How will it help me?
  - What are the side-effects?
  - Will it suit my life and my health concerns?
  - Are there any alternatives?
  - How long will I need it?
- ☐ Could I take a lower dose to get benefits without side-effects?
- ☐ What should I do if I experience side-effects?
- ☐ Where can I find out more?
- ☐ And also \_\_\_\_\_?



## BE PROACTIVE AND CATCH HEALTH PROBLEMS EARLY

- ☐ What regular health checks and side-effect monitoring will I be offered?
- ☐ Why are they important?
- ☐ Do I get a say?
- ☐ How can I get the results and ask any questions?
- ☐ What will happen if a problem is picked up? What happens next?
- ☐ And I also want to ask about \_\_\_\_\_?



## GET YOUR CARERS AND FAMILY INVOLVED

- ☐ How can my carers and family support me?
- ☐ Who can I bring to appointments?
- ☐ What practical actions can we take together to eat better and get more exercise?
- ☐ And could we work together on \_\_\_\_\_?

**Your health practitioners are on your side and want you to be healthy. Don't be afraid to ask for their help!**