

## Screening and prevention of chronic disease in general practice

### Prevention really is better than cure!

All members of the general practice team play an important role in accessing and assessing patients and influencing behaviour change.



The behavioural risk factors of smoking, poor nutrition, harmful alcohol use and insufficient levels of physical activity have been identified as significant contributors to the burden of disease in Australia.

As 85% of the Australian population attends a general practice at least once a year, GPs and practice nurses are ideally placed to have a significant influence on the prevention of chronic and complex conditions.

Appropriate and timely strategies based on proven frameworks such as SNAP(O) not only improve the knowledge, skills and attitude of practice staff but lead to significant improvement in patient outcomes.

#### Factors that contribute to chronic disease

Chronic conditions	BEHAVIOURAL FACTORS					BIOMEDICAL FACTORS	
	Tobacco smoking	Physical inactivity	Alcohol misuse	Nutrition	Obesity	Hyper-tension	Dislipidaemia
Ischaemic heart disease	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stroke	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Type 2 diabetes		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Kidney disease	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Arthritis	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓ <sup>2</sup>			✓ <sup>2</sup>		
Osteoporosis	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Lung cancer	✓						
Colorectal cancer		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	✓						
Asthma	✓						
Depression		✓	✓		✓		
Oral health	✓		✓	✓			

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Indicators of chronic disease and their determinants, 2008 <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications>

<sup>1</sup> Relates to rheumatoid arthritis

<sup>2</sup> Relates to osteoarthritis

### What can you do?

Review current practice and focus on incorporating more prevention messages into your current style of care.

- Do you know how many of your patients are overweight and obese?
- Do you know how many of your patients are at high risk of chronic disease?
- Does your practice routinely record patients' smoking status, blood pressure, etc.?
- Do you actively encourage patients to become involved in national screening programs?
- What chronic disease prevention strategies do you have in your practice?

- Incorporate the SNAP(O) principles into all consultations.
- Refer patients to prevention programs such as Life! or Quitline, etc.
- Have information and promote national campaigns, such as Know Your Numbers and Heart Foundation Tick, to your patients.
- Record and monitor weight, height, smoking status, family history and alcohol consumption. Assess for high risk.
- Equip your practice with posters, newsletters, brochures and other patient information that promotes lifestyle changes.
- Be familiar with patient information resources and be proactive in starting discussions about them.
- Mailouts: send out prevention information with patient accounts, reminder letters, etc.
- Make sure your recall and reminder system is up to date and used.
- Provide resources and education sessions in various languages.
- Use clinical audit tools to identify at risk patients.
- Perform absolute cardiovascular risk assessment at [www.cvdcheck.org.au](http://www.cvdcheck.org.au)

#### Consider the following MBS item numbers when addressing the SNAPO principles:

MBS item number	721
GP management plan	
MBS item number	723
Team care arrangement	
MBS item number	717
45-49 year old health check	
MBS item number	700
75+ year old health check	
MBS item number	10997
Services provided by a practice nurse on behalf of a medical practitioner	

The Victorian General Practice Prevention Alliance (VGPPA), an alliance of five leading non-government organisations (Cancer Council Victoria, Diabetes Australia – Victoria, General Practice Victoria, Heart Foundation (Victoria) and the National Stroke Foundation), is committed to supporting general practice in the primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of chronic disease. For further information and available education and resources, please contact the secretariat at the Heart Foundation (Victoria) on (03) 9321 1530 or visit [www.gpv.org.au/vgppa](http://www.gpv.org.au/vgppa)