

Addressing Chronic Diseases





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***Health-Management Strategies
for Use with Behavioral Health Clients***

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Editor's notes

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of this guide is to help health professionals and their clients learn about and address chronic health conditions that commonly occur in people who have mental health and substance use disorders (or addiction). Helping your clients learn about their physical health and effective prevention and treatment options for chronic diseases is an important part of shared decision-making in the management of their physical health along with treatment for mental health and/or substance use disorders.

Each chapter of this guide focuses on one chronic health condition. For each health condition we cover what the condition is, what causes it, how to screen for it, and what to do if it is present. In the digital files that accompany this guide you will find a Fact Sheet and an Action Plan that accompany each chapter to use with clients. We hope these resources help people who work in the mental health and addiction fields to better understand and talk about these chronic health conditions with clients.

The conditions covered in this guide include the following: high blood pressure, heart and blood vessel disease, overweight and obesity, tobacco use disorders, diabetes, lung disease, infectious diseases and reproductive issues, pain disorders including musculoskeletal problems, cancer, thyroid diseases, gastrointestinal diseases, and the role of self-management in promoting wellness.

Why Is This Topic Important?

About half of Americans have chronic health conditions. More than 35 percent of Americans were obese in 2013. Almost 20 percent of Americans smoked cigarettes. Both mental health disorders and addiction are associated with higher rates of chronic health conditions, which lead to poor quality of life, disability, and early mortality. These diseases are largely preventable, and when they occur, they are treatable. As people with mental health and addiction problems get into recovery, they will become interested in expanding their recovery to include their physical health. We can help our clients avoid acquiring chronic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes—or to better manage them if they are present—through screening, supporting treatment, and helping them engage in a healthy lifestyle.

Additionally, chronic conditions can exacerbate mental health and addiction problems, and the reverse can also be true. Having a better understanding of the whole person, what chronic health conditions are, and how they interact with mental health and addiction will help providers steer clients to a more effective path to whole health recovery.

People across America are recognizing that a whole health approach to recovery—integrating the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of living—improves quality of life. For some people, gaining a better understanding of their physical health can lead to more interest in the whole health of the body and the mind. These individuals may work on whole health recovery as they gain control over their addiction or mental health condition. For example, beginning to exercise can help facilitate abstinence from alcohol, other drugs, and tobacco.

Addiction and mental health treatment programs that adopt this type of whole health approach will need to develop relationships with primary care providers so they can facilitate and link clients to appropriate resources for the screening and treatment of physical chronic conditions. They will also need to attain necessary local and national licensing and follow scope of practice rules, regulations, and laws.

In conclusion, as American healthcare moves toward integration and coordination of care, a new approach—in which behavioral health clinicians have a better understanding of physical health, and medical professionals better understand behavioral health conditions—is becoming the norm. We hope this guide helps you move in this direction.

Using This Guide

This guide is designed to be easily understood by both medical and nonmedical professionals as well as by laypeople. It can be used in any setting where health-care providers are working to improve the lives of people with substance use and/or mental health disorders, including addiction treatment or mental health treatment settings (inpatient, outpatient, or residential), and health management sessions can be facilitated by a clinician, counselor, coach, or peer support member. Both clients seeking recovery from substance use and/or mental health disorders and their families will find this information useful.

Mental health and addiction staff may want to read the entire guide for education and guidelines on the chronic diseases that commonly occur in their clients. Staff may also refer to any one chapter to focus on a particular chronic illness to help a client avoid or better manage that illness. For example, when working with a person who has alcohol dependence and anxiety, but also suffers from chronic back

pain and obesity, refer to Chapter 3: Overweight and Obesity and to Chapter 8: Common Chronic Pain Conditions.

Additionally, we encourage all staff to read Chapter 12: Wellness and Self-Management. This chapter includes important information on wellness and self-management that you can integrate into each discussion you have with clients about any chronic condition. This chapter offers practical guidance on how a client can improve his or her health by practicing prevention and effective management of any existing health condition.

Templates of action plans for each discussed category of chronic conditions appear in the digital files that accompany this guide. The digital files for chapter 12 include examples of action plans in the areas of self-managing diet, exercise, medication, and stress. The action plan templates contain suggestions for a specific action plan in relation to each chronic health condition. Clients can detail an action plan regarding any potential change: this involves thinking through how to make the plan achievable and how to implement it successfully.

Sample Fact Sheet

Sample Action Plan

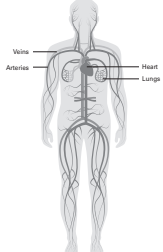
FACT SHEET

High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

What is High Blood Pressure?
High blood pressure, also called *hypertension*, means the pressure in your blood vessel system is higher than normal. High blood pressure increases your risk of heart attack and stroke, which are common causes of early death in the United States.

How Common is High Blood Pressure?
About one in three U.S. adults has high blood pressure.¹ People with co-occurring disorders have higher rates of this condition. High blood pressure can be identified and treated. Keeping your blood pressure under control can prevent heart disease and death.

How Do the Heart and Blood Vessels Work?
The heart is a pump. Heart muscles contract and relax to push blood through your arteries and veins, delivering oxygen and nutrients to every part of your body. Cells and tissues cannot survive if they don't receive oxygen from the blood. Blood pressure is the force of the blood against the walls of the arteries as the blood flows through the body. Blood pressure is expressed as two numbers, for example, 140/90, which is spoken as "140 over 90." The higher first number is the blood pressure inside the arteries when the heart is contracting, and the lower second number is the blood pressure inside the arteries when the heart is relaxing. Your blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day. If it stays high for long periods of time, it can cause problems. If the blood vessel system becomes stiff, blood pressure goes up and the heart has to work harder to pump the blood through the



system. High blood pressure can lead to serious heart disease, stroke, or kidney disease, even when a person has no symptoms. Experts recommend that people get treatment to keep their blood pressure lower than 140/90.

What Causes High Blood Pressure?
High blood pressure has numerous causes, including these:

- inheriting a high chance of high blood pressure from your parents
- using cigarettes, alcohol, cocaine, or other drugs
- being overweight, especially if you have extra weight around the belly
- eating a diet high in salt
- doing little physical activity
- experiencing high stress

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "High Blood Pressure Facts," last updated February 19, 2015, www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/facts.htm.

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ACTION PLAN

High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

1. My blood pressure reading is ____ / ____.
2. I have high blood pressure.
 - ___ I will make an appointment with my physician to talk about my high blood pressure and possible medications.
 - ___ I will make an appointment with my physician to adjust my blood pressure medicine.
 - ___ I will take my blood pressure medicine regularly. I should take:
 - _____ dose _____ times a day.
 - (amount) (number)
 - ___ I will check my blood pressure on a daily basis with a blood pressure monitor.
3. Below is a list of my medicines and why I take each one. If have questions about my medicines, I will ask my doctor.
 - _____
 - _____
4. I will also take the following steps:
 - a. I will not use alcohol or other drugs.
 - My plan: _____
 - b. I will lose weight or eat more healthy foods.
 - My plan: _____
 - c. I will exercise more.
 - My plan: _____
 - d. I will reduce the stress in my life.
 - My plan: _____

Client signature _____ Date _____

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Use the Fact Sheets and Action Plans included in the digital files that accompany this guide to educate clients on each chronic illness.

Facilitate a Health Management Session

Many of our clients enter treatment with one or more physical chronic diseases to manage. Even if they do not currently have a chronic disease, they are at high risk for acquiring one or more of the common chronic diseases found in people with a mental health and/or substance use disorder. You can help your clients practice active prevention and/or management of a chronic physical disease by using this guide to facilitate a health management session with clients in a group or individual setting.

Use the Fact Sheet and Action Plan included in the digital files that accompany this guide to educate clients on each chronic illness and as a shared decision-making tool to help the client choose and commit to proven self-management strategies. You may choose to include supportive family members in this discussion.

Use the Quick Start Guide to Facilitating a Health Management Session for step-by-step instructions on how to prepare and conduct a session with clients.

The materials you most commonly need to print—the Fact Sheets, Action Plans, and Quick Start Guide to Facilitating a Health Management Session—are included in the digital files that come with this program.

