



Rethink
Mental
Illness.

Physical health check tool:

Supporting you to
manage your physical
health alongside your
mental health

Personal details

Complete this section with your details in case your tool gets lost.

Your name:

Your address:

Your email:

Your phone number:

Please list what medication you take:

Would you like your carer to be involved in your physical health checks? If so, please complete the section below:

Your carer's name:

Your carer's address:

Your carer's email:

Your carer's phone number:

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Introduction

When you are struggling with your mental health you may be very focused on your mental wellbeing, but it is important to keep on top of your physical health too.

The NHS recommends that people with certain mental health conditions should have an annual health check with their GP to support them to be as physically well as possible. If you go for your annual health check, they will look at

- The level of cholesterol in your blood
- The level of glucose (sugar) in your blood
- Your blood pressure
- Whether you smoke
- How much alcohol you drink
- Your height and weight

Most people will get a letter or a text message from their GP practice to remind them when it is time for their annual physical health check, but you can always ask to have these tests done at other points of the year rather than wait for your invitation.

The purpose of this tool is to support you to work in partnership with your healthcare professionals (and carers if appropriate) to make sure that you get these checks done every year, and that you have appropriate follow-up support.

It gives an overview of what each of the checks are and how they are done, along with information to help you understand your results. It also has space for you or your healthcare professionals to note down who did the checks and when so that you have a record of them.

What to do if you are afraid of needles?

Some people don't like getting blood tests because they are afraid of needles. This is very common and is nothing to be embarrassed about. There are lots of tips and techniques out there which can help people manage their fear of needles:

- Tell the person who is doing your blood test that you are worried. They can answer any concerns you may have and help you cope with the procedure, for example they can keep chatting to distract you.
- Think about whether there has been anything which has helped you to cope with needles in the past. Can you use something like this to help you again?
- If you feel panicky (for example your heart races, your chest feels tight and your stomach churns), but you do not feel faint, you can learn a breathing for relaxation exercise.
- If your fear is linked to fainting, or feeling faint, you can learn an applied tension technique. This is a simple technique to increase blood pressure back to normal levels so that you do not faint.

(Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, 2017)



Section

1

Blood test for cholesterol

This blood test checks how much cholesterol is in your blood. Cholesterol is a fatty substance that your body needs to function normally, but if you have too much it can block the arteries that carry blood around your body and cause health problems.

To perform a blood test, a healthcare professional will usually place a band around your upper arm (called a tourniquet) to slow down the flow of blood, making it easier to take blood with a needle and syringe from the inside of your elbow or wrist. You may feel a little scratch from the needle, but it should not be painful.

The test result will give a score that will tell you and your healthcare professional how much cholesterol is in your blood and whether you are advised to take any action.

Date	Who took this measure?	What was the result?
Example: 01/01/2019	Who: Jane Bloggs (practice nurse) Where: Daisy Bank General Practice	Total cholesterol: 6.2 Non-HDL chol: 6.6

What does this mean?	Do I need to take any action? Yes/No	What is this action?	What are my next steps?
Your cholesterol is <u>higher</u> than the healthy level	Yes – dietary and lifestyle	Work with the dietitian to modify diet and alcohol intake. Referral to smoking cessation service.	Return in 3 months to repeat the blood test, if there is no change then medication is to be considered

Results

Healthy level

Total cholesterol	5 or below
HDL ('good' cholesterol)	1 or above
LDL ('bad' cholesterol)	3 or below
Non-HDL ('bad' cholesterol)	4 or below

(NHS Choices, 2019)

Blood test for glucose

This test checks how much glucose (sugar) is in your blood and whether it is within a healthy range. Blood sugar is usually tested with a small finger prick and can be used to check for and monitor type 2 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes is a condition where glucose in your blood becomes too high due to problems with a hormone called insulin. This can cause symptoms such as excessive thirst, needing the toilet often and extreme tiredness.

The finger prick test will give a score that will tell you and your healthcare professional how much glucose is in your blood and whether you are advised to take any action. Glucose is measured in mmol/l, which means 'millimole per litre'.

Date	Who took this measure?	What was the result?
Example: 01/01/2019	Who: Jane Bloggs (practice nurse) Where: Daisy Bank General Practice	HbA1c: 46 Random plasma glu- cose: 11

HbA1c



Normal

Prediabetes

Diabetes

Mmol/mol

Below 42

42 - 47

Over 48

What does this mean?

Do I need to take any action?

Yes/No

What is this action?

What are my next steps?

Your blood sugar is slightly higher than normal but not in the diabetic range	Yes	Await a referral to the dietitian who can support me to adopt a balanced diet which is low in sugar	Return in 3 months to repeat the test

Plasma glucose test



- Normal
- Prediabetes
- Diabetes

Random mmol/l

- Below 11.1
- N/A
- Above 11.1

Fasting mmol/l

- Below 5.5
- 5.5-6.9
- Above 7

(Diabetes UK, 2019)

Section 2

Blood pressure

A blood pressure test is a simple way of seeing the strength which your blood pushes on your arteries as it is pumped around your body. It is important to try and keep this at a healthy level as high blood pressure can lead to complications such as heart attacks and strokes.

The procedure involves placing a cuff around your arm which then tightens and releases. It reads both your systolic pressure (the pressure when your heart pushes blood out) and diastolic pressure (the pressure when your heart rests in between beats).

The test result will give a score that will tell you and your healthcare professional the strength at which your blood is pumping around your body and whether you are advised to take any action.

Blood pressure is recorded as a higher figure (systolic) 'over' a lower figure (diastolic).

Date	Who took this measure?	What was the result?
Example: 01/01/2019	Who: Dr Joe Bloggs, (GP) Where: Daisy Bank General Practice	145/91

What does this mean?

Do I need to take any action?

Yes/No

What is this action?

What are my next steps?

Your blood pressure has entered the high range.	Yes	Lifestyle changes including reduced intake of salt, alcohol, and caffeine	Repeat this check at my next appointment

Blood pressure reading

Systolic/diastolic mmHg

Low	Lower than 90/60
Normal	90/60 – 120/80
High	Above 140/90

Section 3

Smoking status

As a part of your physical health check, you will be asked whether you smoke. This is because smoking puts people at an increased risk of some cancers and lung conditions, and cardiovascular problems.

If you smoke, whether you are a social smoker or have been a heavy smoker for most of your life, it is never too late to quit. There are evidence-based therapies and treatments available to help you quit, like nicotine replacement products, medications and support groups.

You can get a lot of help and support to quit smoking, and also help you to manage the challenge of stopping smoking - especially if you use smoking to help with your mental wellbeing.

Date	Who took this measure?
------	------------------------

Example: 01/01/2019	Who: Bob Smith (Care co-ordinator) Where: Anytown CMHT

Smoking status	Do I need to take any action? Yes/No	What is this action?	What are my next steps?
Current smoker	Yes	Access a smoking cessation service	Ask for a referral to a smoking cessation service at my next GP appointment



Local community services to help with stopping smoking

This table can be used to map the local services in your area that your healthcare professional may signpost you to. For example, there may be some stop-smoking support groups or 1:1 psychological support available in your area.

Type of service for example one to one/group support	Referral process	What are the potential barriers for accessing this service? For example: travel to service	How could I overcome them?
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Section 4

Alcohol intake

Alcohol intake is measured by calculating how many units you drink per week, and this will be discussed in your check. A unit is a measure used to tell how strong a drink is. A unit is equivalent to 10ml of pure alcohol.

Regularly drinking more than 14 units of alcohol per week can pose a risk to your health. It can cause liver problems, reduced fertility, high blood pressure and increase the risk of heart attack and certain cancers.

The below table can tell you how many units are in different types of drinks, so that you can estimate how many units you drink per week:

1 unit	A single 25ml shot of spirits (for example vodka, rum, gin).
1.5 units	A small glass of wine (125ml).
2 units	A pint of lower strength beer, lager or cider.
2.1 units	A standard glass of wine (175ml).
3 units	A large glass of wine (250ml).

Date Who took this measure?

Example: 01/01/2019	Who: Bob Smith (Care co-ordinator) Where: Anytown CMHT

Alcohol status	Do I need to take any action? Yes/No	What is this action?	What are my next steps?
Units per week: 10 AUDIT Score: 9	no	N/A	Continue to monitor drinking patterns via the PHE: One You App

Another way to measure your relationship with alcohol is with questionnaires such as the Fast Alcohol Screening Test (FAST) or the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT). These questionnaires ask about how much alcohol you drink but also how this makes you feel and how it may impact your life.



Local community services to help with reducing or stopping drinking alcohol

This table can be used to map the local services in your area that your healthcare professional may signpost you to. For example, there may be some workshops at your local Recovery College about alcohol and mental health, or a local Alcoholics Anonymous group if your drinking causes you problems and you would like to stop.

Type of service

for example one to one/group support

Referral process

What are the potential barriers for accessing this service?

For example: travel to the service

How could I overcome them?

Section 5

Height and weight

Sometimes when we take certain medications, have been inactive for a long period of time, or as a result of other factors like change in appetite, our weight can fluctuate up or down. Sometimes, eating healthily can seem expensive and too difficult to navigate.

Your body mass index (BMI) is calculated by measuring your height and weight, and it is generally advised to be at or around 25, but some people fall above or below this number.

However, there are many different factors which influence this that you can discuss with your health practitioner such as your GP or nurse.

Date	Who took this measure?	What was the result?
Example: 01/01/2019	Who: Betty Smith (occupational therapist) Where: Anytown CMHT	BMI: 28 Physical activity: less active recently due to fatigue and tiredness Eating behaviours: increased appetite since new medication

What does this mean?

Do I need to take any action?

Yes/No

What is this action?

What are my next steps?

<p>You have noticed that your new medication has affected your appetite and energy levels.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>We will aim to keep my weight stable until my next appointment by establishing a regular eating pattern of nutritious food and snacks, using the below Eatwell Plate resource.</p>	<p>Create a food diary below to self-monitor my food intake as well as explore ways to gradually increase my physical activity</p>

Local community services to support healthy weight management

This table can be used to map the local services in your area that your healthcare professional may signpost you to. For example, there may be accessible physical activity programmes or cooking classes in your local area.

Type of service for example one to one/group support	Referral process	What are the potential barriers for accessing this service? For example: not owning any sportswear	How could I overcome them?
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It is important to keep a varied diet made up of all the food groups. Try to mix and match with different foods and use the diagram below to plan your meals:

THE EATWELL PLATE



A guide to the right balance of the five main food groups

-  Fruit & Veg
-  Carbs & Starches
-  Dairy
-  Protein
-  Sugars & Fats

Section 6

Other important health checks to consider

This section outlines other health checks that you might want to consider as part of looking after your physical health. They are not part of the annual physical health check, but are part of other health programmes run by the NHS

6.1 Cancer screening

NHS cancer screening programmes invite people to have tests for signs of common cancers so that they can be prevented or caught early when they are more easily treatable. Below are some that you may be invited to take part in:

Bowel cancer screening - Bowel cancer can affect both men and women.

Possible signs of bowel cancer include:

- Bleeding from your bottom.
- Blood in your stools.
- A change in bowel habit for three weeks or more (especially to looser or runny stools).
- Unexplained weight loss.
- Unexplained extreme tiredness.
- A pain or lump in your tummy.

If you have noticed any of these changes, then it is important to ask your GP to check this out. If you are between 60 and 74 years old (in England), you will be invited to have a regular bowel cancer screening check every two years. This is a home testing kit, where you provide a sample of your stools for it to be looked at to see if there is any blood in it. If blood is found, you will be asked to go for more tests to explore the cause of this in case it is cancer, however there are many reasons that blood can be found that are not related to cancer.

Mammograms – If you are a woman aged between 50 and 70 years old and are registered with a GP you will be invited for a mammogram test every three years. Also, men who take antipsychotics may be invited for a mammogram as this medication can affect tissue in your chest area.

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast. The x-rays are checked to see if there are any abnormalities that could suggest breast cancer. Only female staff carry out mammograms.

Smear tests - All women between 25 and 64 years old who are registered with a GP receive regular invites for cervical screening which tend to be referred to as smear tests. Smear tests check if there are any abnormal cells in the cervix to prevent cervical cancer. If you are between 25 and 49 you will get an invitation every three years. If you are older than this, you will receive an invitation every five years. The test usually takes about 5 minutes. A doctor or nurse will gently hold your vagina open and brush your cervix to take a sample of cells to be tested. It can feel uncomfortable but is not usually painful. Relaxing as much as possible will make the test easier. If you would specifically like the test to be carried out by a female you can ask for this.

Prostate cancer – All men over 50 can ask their GP about risk factors for prostate cancer, and discuss whether screening is appropriate.

6.2 Sexual health screening

It is important to regularly check your sexual health, especially if you get a new partner or start a new relationship. Some areas now offer home testing kits for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) where you can access results online. Otherwise, you can attend your local sexual health clinic in person to ask for sexual health tests.

6.3 Dental screening

Going to the dentist and keeping your teeth and gums in check is a key way to stay healthy. Some medications can have an impact on a person's oral health. Some people have to pay for their dentistry, but you may be eligible to free dental care - an NHS dentist will be able to explore this with you.

6.4 Eye tests

It is also important to have your eyes checked to make sure they are healthy. You should have a check-up every two years (unless you've been told to go more often or have diabetes).

6.5 ECG checks

An electrocardiogram (ECG) is a simple test that can be used to monitor your heart's rhythm and electrical activity. ECG monitoring is useful if you take antipsychotic medications or if there are other factors present which can affect your heart's health.

If you have any concerns about the health of your heart, discuss this with your healthcare professionals who can advise you on whether an ECG would be helpful.

Trauma informed care

For some people, the above screenings and tests can feel intrusive and uncomfortable and could potentially trigger distressing feelings surrounding past experiences.

If this happens, you might find it helpful to use the checklist below to communicate your feelings to a healthcare professional:

- Ask me for my consent before touching me
- Explain what you are doing before you do it
- Give me regular breaks during treatment
- Establish a system/sign so I can tell you to stop
- Adjust my seating position
- Offer me pain relief for minor procedures
- Talk to me about what I need from you
- Listen to me when I tell you to stop

Appointment planner

When is my appointment?

Who is my appointment with?

Where will my appointment take place?

Date: _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

**Would I like anyone
to come along with
me?**

**What was
discussed at the
appointment?**

**What are my next
steps?**

Section 7

Further resources

This section outlines organisations that have more information on some of the issues raised in this toolkit and more generally on managing your physical health.

Alcohol Change

Alcohol Change UK is a leading UK alcohol charity.

www.alcoholchange.org.uk

Alcohol use disorders identification test (AUDIT)

This alcohol harm assessment tool consists of the consumption questions from the full alcohol use disorders identification test (AUDIT).

www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/audit/en/

British Nutrition Foundation

The British Nutrition Foundation is a registered charity providing impartial, evidence-based information on food and nutrition.

www.nutrition.org.uk

Brook

A sexual health charity providing advice and services to support young people.

www.brook.org.uk

Drinkline

Drinkline is the national alcohol helpline. If you're worried about your own or someone else's drinking, you can call this free helpline in complete confidence.

[0300 123 1110 \(weekdays 9am to 8pm, weekends 11am to 4pm\)](tel:03001231110)

Macmillan Cancer Support

Macmillan provide physical, financial and emotional support for people affected by cancer.

www.macmillan.org.uk

NHS Website

Advice, tips and tools to help you make the best choices about your health and wellbeing. NHS service finders also available so that you can find GPs, dentists and opticians near you.

www.nhs.uk

Quit

Quit provides practical help, advice and support by trained counsellors to all smokers who want to stop. They aim to save lives by preventing the development of cancer, heart disease and other illnesses from use of tobacco.

www.quit.org.uk

Victim Focus

VictimFocus, is an independent business providing research, consultancy, writing and speaking in forensic psychology, feminism and mental health. Here, there are many resources resources that you can share with your healthcare professionals to deliver healthcare professionals deliver trauma-informed care.

www.victimfocus.org.uk



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