



## TOPIC 4

# Self-care

## Topic introduction

### Background

Self-care, where appropriate, is at the heart of a partnership between the individual, the family and community on the one hand, and the NHS with all the services it provides on the other. It is acknowledged, however, that in order for the NHS to promote health and protect its citizens, the population needs to be well-informed and confident and able to look after its own health, where that is possible, using services appropriately when this is not possible.

Supporting learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs is one way of contributing to better self-care.

### National targets / policies

Self-care was highlighted in the *NHS Plan* as one of the key building blocks for a patient-centred health service. More recently, self-care featured as a key component of the *Model for Supporting People With Long-term Conditions*.<sup>1</sup> Research shows that supporting self-care can improve health outcomes, increase patient satisfaction and help in deploying the biggest collaborative resource available to the NHS and social care – patients and the public. Helping people with self-care represents an exciting opportunity and challenge for the NHS and social care services to empower patients to take more control over their lives.

A survey on public attitudes to self-care, conducted by the Department of Health in 2005, reported that:

*'The English public feel that they are already active, knowledgeable and interested in doing self-care and there is evidence to show that a significant proportion are acting on this.'*<sup>2</sup>

Evidence also suggests that, given people's seeming lack of understanding of what living a healthy life means, their motivation for self-care is not at the level that it could be, especially regarding healthy lifestyles.

- Supporting people will be key to motivating better self-care – this will also empower them and give them the confidence they need.

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1. The NHS and Social Care long term conditions model  
[www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/LongTermConditions/LongTermConditionsArticle/fs/en?CONTENT\\_ID=4130652&chk=d8PRGO](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/LongTermConditions/LongTermConditionsArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4130652&chk=d8PRGO)

2. Public attitudes to self-care – baseline survey  
[www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/11/12/64/04111264.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/11/12/64/04111264.pdf)

- Information and support from health professionals – especially GPs – will play a key role. However, the public feels that health professionals are currently not actively encouraging self-care and work with all health professionals to develop their role in this regard is needed.
- Community support groups, pharmacists, local community champions and Internet-based information sources could play a greater role in promoting self-care.
- The most elderly, socio-economically deprived and ethnic minority groups may need particular attention to enhance self-care – whilst tending to be of poorer health, they are less active in self-care and less confident in their knowledge and understanding of how to self-care.

The policy document *Choosing health through pharmacy* states:

*‘Pharmacists will play a key role in the “health promoting NHS”. They have a distinctive contribution to make in reducing tobacco and alcohol consumption, obesity, unwanted pregnancy, and inequalities in health. For community pharmacies, their location provides opportunities for community involvement and leadership (e.g. through school and workplace initiatives). Pharmacies are local, accessible and convenient for patients and the public. In many places, they have extended opening hours.’*

### **This topic**

This topic follows on from Topic 3: ‘Finding out about health concerns’. It focuses on some specific health behaviours that learners are expected to manage for themselves, for example:

- making decisions about whether to take up immunisation or screening invitations
- taking their own or a child’s temperature
- following instructions for taking prescribed medicines.

The theme ‘Advice from the pharmacist’ outlines the support learners can get from community pharmacists.

The themes in this topic are:

- Taking temperatures
- Immunisation and health screening
- Remembering spoken instructions
- Checking medicine labels
- Dosage and timing
- Advice from the pharmacist

### **Further information and suggestions**

Local community pharmacists or the director of pharmacy at the primary care trust’s public health department should be able to provide information about pharmacy services and may be willing to talk to learners about this.

## Mapping to the core curriculum

Topic 4 Self-care				
Theme	Literacy	Language	Numeracy	Page references
Taking temperatures			MSS1/E3.9	278–284
Immunisation and health screening	Rt/E3.5, Rt/L1.5, Rw/E3.1		HD1/E3.1, HD1/L1.4, MSS1/E3.3	285–295
Remembering spoken instructions	SLlr/E3.2, SLlr/E3.4, SLc/E3.4			296–303
Checking medicine labels	Rt/E3.5, Rt/E3.7, Rw/E3.1, Rt/E3.8		MSS1/L1.2	304–316
Dosage and timing	Rt/E3.5, Rt/E3.7, Rt/E3.8, Rt/E3.3		N1/E3.6, MSS1/L1.3	317–330
Advice from the pharmacist		Lr/E3.2c, Lr/E3.3b		331–345

Highlighted curriculum items [ ] = included in National Tests