

Community Pharmacy Living Well Campaign



August 2026

'Managing anxiety' campaign briefing

The 'Managing anxiety' campaign offers practical tips and ideas to help manage anxiety, along with information on where to find support if you need it. The campaign will run during August and September 2026.

In Northern Ireland almost one in five adults has a potential mental health problem (**Health Survey NI 2024/2025**). Looking after our mental health is not something we should only do when we are feeling down, it's something we should proactively maintain, just like our physical health.

Feeling anxious is a common experience for many people. A healthy level of anxiety can help you prepare for important tasks, such as studying for an exam or finishing a work project. Sometimes feelings of anxiety can be hard to control and they can impact on how you live your life. This campaign highlights things you can try that might help and where to find more support, if you need it.

Target audience

The general adult population.

Key messages

- Feeling anxious at times is normal.
- A healthy level of anxiety can help you prepare for important tasks.
- Sometimes feelings of anxiety can be hard to control and they may impact on how you live your life.
- There are things you can try to help with anxiety and make a difference to how you are feeling. The campaign leaflet highlights some of these things.
- It's important to get help for anxiety if it has lasted a long time, it is stopping you doing things you normally would do and/or you have tried things to help yourself, but you aren't feeling better.
- You can get help from your GP or use the service directory on Minding your head to look for a service that meets your needs – **www.mindingyourhead.info/services**
- It is possible to recover from mental health problems, and lots of people do – especially after getting support.

Social media

For pharmacies using social media channels, there is an opportunity to let followers know the pharmacy is involved in the campaign and to promote the campaign messages. Please share the Public Health Agency's (PHA) posts or create your own posts and tag the PHA, Health and Social Care NI, Community Pharmacy NI and The Northern Ireland Centre for Pharmacy Learning & Development (NICPLD) in your posts.

Please use the hashtags #LivingWell, #ManagingAnxiety and #MindingYourHead as appropriate on social media posts for this campaign.



X:

@publichealthni
@HSC_NI
@compharmacyni
@NICPLD1



Facebook:

@publichealthagency
@healthandsocialcareni
@communitypharmacyni
@NICPLD



Instagram:

@publichealthni
@health_and_social_care
@compharmacyni
@NICPLD1

All Living Well materials to support this campaign can be found at **<https://bsc.hscni.net/living-well>**

Campaign materials

Copies of the following materials are enclosed:

2 x A3 posters

Feeling anxious? Breathing exercises can help



Feeling anxious? There are things you can try that might help



1 x A1 poster

Feeling anxious? Breathing exercises can help



A5 leaflet

Feeling anxious? A guide to things that can help



Minding your head wallet card



Pharmacies should display the posters and leaflets in the pharmacy within a designated health promotion display area. Posters can be rotated over the two month period, but if space permits within the pharmacy all posters may be displayed at the same time. Pharmacies must show a poster in at least one window unit for the full duration of the campaign.

Suggested campaign activities for the public

Start conversations around mental health

The *Feeling anxious? A guide to things that can help* leaflet and *Minding your head* wallet card can be handed out with prescriptions or to those attending the pharmacy and used as a conversation starter. You may wish to identify people who might need support, such as:

- Patients on medication for mental health problems.
- Those living with long-term medical conditions or disabilities.
- LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- Patients/customers requesting over-the-counter medicine or herbal remedies for anxiety and/or sleep.

Demonstrate calming skills

Calming techniques are shown to help with symptoms of anxiety and stress. They aim to bring your focus to the present moment, taking your mind off anxious thoughts. You could talk through and/or demonstrate the simple exercises in the leaflet with patients. You may wish to familiarise yourself with other calming techniques available on **www.mindingyourhead.info**. Encourage patients to try different exercises until they find one or two that works for them.

Promote local opportunities to Take 5

The Take 5 steps to wellbeing encourages people to take simple, everyday actions to look after their mental health and wellbeing. They are:

1. Connect
2. Keep learning
3. Be active
4. Take notice
5. Give

You could suggest local opportunities to Take 5 – events and activities in the local church or community centre for Connect; signpost people to the library to Keep Learning; promote Walking for Health groups by getting

information from your Trust contact for Be active; promote local parks or nature reserves where people could go to Take notice; and for Give, highlight any volunteering opportunities in your local community.

For more information and advice about promoting Take 5, please contact the Health Improvement Lead in your Trust area:

Clare.Flynn@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Laura.McAllister2@setrust.hscni.net

Selena.Ramsey@northerntrust.hscni.net

Sonia.Campbell@westerntrust.hscni.net

Julie.Graham@southerntrust.hscni.net

Social prescribing

Social prescribing involves putting people in touch with local networks and services, and increasing their active involvement within their local community. It complements the Take 5 steps to wellbeing approach. Emerging evidence suggests that social prescribing can lead to a range of positive health and wellbeing outcomes for people, such as improved quality of life and emotional wellbeing.

If you know of social prescribing projects in your area, please utilise them. We would encourage pharmacies to contact projects that are relevant to their patients' needs and enquire as to how to refer.

Mental health and wellbeing apps

A selection of mental health and wellbeing apps can be found on the HSC Apps Library. These offer self-help information and advice for adults seeking mental health support. The apps include topics such as anxiety, depression, stress, sleep and meditation. You may wish to familiarise yourself with the apps available to provide personalised recommendations for patients. Visit <https://apps4healthcare.ni.hscni.net/en-GB/adult-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

Professional help

Some people may need extra help based on their individual circumstances. If you are concerned about a patient, please encourage them to talk to their GP, a mental health professional or a relevant service, such as Lifeline, Northern Ireland's crisis response helpline, on 0808 808 8000.

You could also familiarise yourself with the service directory on Minding your head and signpost patients to a local service appropriate to their needs. Visit www.mindingyourhead.info/services

Campaign activities for pharmacy teams

It is important for pharmacy team members to prioritise their own mental health and create a supportive working environment. Here are some campaign activities to consider:

Weekly self-care challenges

Consider launching a weekly self-care challenge to encourage staff to adopt healthy habits. This could be building the Take 5 steps to wellbeing into everyday life.

Host a mini-workshop

Pharmacies could host brief workshops (10-15 minutes) with the pharmacy team, perhaps before work, on topics like calming skills, Take 5 or stress management. You could collaborate with a local service to deliver the training or host your own using the guidance on

www.mindingyourhead.info/campaigns

If space and time permits, you could even host a workshop for the public.

Pharmacists' Advice and Support Service

The Pharmacists' Advice and Support Service (PASS) provides a range of free, impartial and confidential services to pharmacists (and their dependants), and foundation year students. These include information and signposting to sources of support and face-to-face, telephone, and specialist counselling. For further information, visit www.pfni.org.uk/pass/how-we-can-help or telephone the PASS Coordinator (Mob: 07951 044876).

If you are aware of any other wellbeing benefits provided by your employer, please share this information with colleagues.

Training and professional development

NICPLD offers courses on anxiety disorders, bipolar affective disorder, depression, schizophrenia and zero suicide awareness training. Recorded webinars on anxiety and supporting individuals with suicidal thoughts in pharmacy practice, are also available. Visit www.nicpld.org

Information on courses supported by the PHA (stress control classes, Mindset Adult, Mental Health First Aid NI, safeTALK and applied suicide intervention skills training) is available at www.mindingyourhead.info/training

Medicines and mental health

Be mindful about the medicines that could affect mental health. You could undertake training in this clinical area to further enhance your knowledge and help identify those at potential risk.

It's also important to encourage patients to keep an up-to-date list of medications to help them know their medicines and be able to discuss them with a healthcare professional should they need to. The *My Medicines List* leaflet and form can be printed from www.pha.site/my-medicines-list

Find out more about mental health conditions, treatments and medications. Visit www.choiceandmedication.org/hscni

Questions and answers

Q: What simple advice can I give someone who says they are feeling anxious day-to-day?

A: Suggest starting with small, practical steps such as trying the calming skills techniques to find what works for them or practicing the Take 5 steps to wellbeing. Give them the campaign leaflet and wallet card so they can find out more about anxiety and support available.

Q: What do I do if someone requests herbal remedies to help with their mood?

A: The promotion of herbal medicines is not part of this campaign. Some herbal medicines can be misused and can affect how other medications work.

Q: What do I do if someone presents with a more serious mental health problem?

A: If you are concerned about someone, advise them to make an appointment with their GP. You can also signpost them to Lifeline or call Lifeline on their behalf – 0808 808 8000. If you feel the person is in immediate danger, dial 999.

Q: What if a patient has questions or concerns about starting or stopping medications for a mental health condition, or has worries about side effects?

A: Patients who have questions or concerns about their prescribed medications can be provided with advice and reassurance by their pharmacist. Patients should be advised to review the patient information leaflet, and the pharmacist should answer any specific questions such as the potential benefits and how to manage and report any side effects. Should a patient wish to stop their medication, it's important to signpost them to speak to their GP or mental health professional before making any changes/stopping any medication.



Public Health
Agency



Health and
Social Care

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Tel: 0300 555 0114 (local rate).
www.publichealth.hscni.net

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