



Using the Neami Health Prompt:

Practice guidance for community mental health settings



Acknowledgments



We acknowledge Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities as the Traditional Custodians of the land we work on and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise that their sovereignty was never ceded.



We celebrate, value and include people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.

Contact us

Neami National Head Office

4-8 Water Road, Preston Vic 3072

P 03 8691 5300

F 03 8678 1106

hello@neaminational.org.au

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Introduction

People who experience mental health challenges often face barriers to physical health care, which can lead to preventable health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, respiratory illness and cancer. These barriers contribute to a significant gap in life expectancy compared to the general population.

The **Neami Health Prompt** is designed to support person-led conversations about physical health in a way that feels safe, respectful and collaborative. It helps reduce missed opportunities for early intervention and empowers people to make choices that matter to them.



Overview of the Neami Health Prompt

The prompt is a flexible tool for guiding conversations about physical health. It's designed to be used collaboratively and at a pace that feels comfortable for the person.

Key features:

- It is not an assessment – it is a guide for physical health conversations.
- Person-led – people can skip questions or pause at any time.
- Flexible – it can be completed in one session or across several conversations.

The five sections

Each section focuses on a different aspect of health and wellbeing:

1. **Navigating health care and support** – explores confidence in finding and using health services.
2. **Health checks and preventative care** – covers routine checks, screenings and medication reviews.
3. **Your daily life and wellbeing** – explores movement, food access, hydration and lifestyle factors.
4. **Pain, movement and understanding your body** – touches on sleep, oral health, vision, hearing and any changes that feel concerning.
5. **Your health story and next steps** – invites open discussion about priorities and preferred support.



Practice tip

If time is short, start with Section 2 (health checks and preventative care) to identify immediate priorities, then return to other sections later.

Response options

Responses are simple and designed to guide follow-up:

- **Yes** – an area of strength or something that's working well
- **No** – an area to explore together for support
- **Skip** – a choice not to answer, respect and revisit if invited
- **N/A** – not relevant for the person.

The body chart

The body chart can help people show areas of concern visually. This may be helpful for people who:

- prefer to communicate visually rather than verbally
- find written questions challenging or prefer a simpler way to share information
- speak a language other than English as their first language.

It offers an accessible way to share health concerns without needing clinical language, supporting choice and different communication preferences.



Using the Neami Health Prompt

When to offer it

Offer the prompt:

- at intake
- every six months
- whenever circumstances change – this may include emerging health concerns, service transitions or medication changes
- when conversations about health arise.

These moments are opportunities to check in on physical health, surface priorities and prevent missed opportunities for care.

Start the conversation together

Introducing the Neami Health Prompt as an invitation and a choice is important because it helps build trust and sets the tone for a collaborative conversation about physical health that reflects what matters most to the person.

Helpful phrases for starting the conversation

'This is a tool we can use together to talk about your physical health and what matters most to you. You can skip anything that doesn't feel right, and we'll go at a pace that works for you.'

'We can use this prompt as a guide to explore your health in a way that feels comfortable for you. You're in control of what we talk about, and we can take it one step at a time.'

Tips for a supportive start

Offer choice and autonomy	Ask what feels relevant today and whether they want to pause or continue
Check preferences early	Pronouns, preferred language for body and health, cultural or access needs
Be transparent	Explain why you're asking, how information will be used, and check consent before sharing.
Normalise skipping questions	<i>'It's okay to leave anything out you are not comfortable answering.'</i>
Start with familiar topics	Offer to begin with areas that feel less confronting
Use plain, inclusive language	Avoid jargon and clinical terms
Acknowledge that health conversations can feel personal	Allow space and time
Invite feedback	<i>'Is there anything that would make this easier for you?'</i>
Check emotional safety	Notice signs of discomfort and offer breaks
Frame as a partnership	<i>'We'll go at a pace that works for you.'</i>

Bringing the Neami Health Prompt into everyday practice

The prompt works best when it's part of regular conversations, not a one-off activity. It should feel natural and integrated into the way you support people. When using it, consider your service context and scope – staff across different roles and services can use the tool in ways that align with their responsibilities, local pathways and health promotion activities. It can also sit alongside broader health promotion and health literacy activities, and staff may choose to use the prompt themselves as part of parallel practice, reflecting on their own health and wellbeing.

Ways to integrate it:

- Offer it at intake, reviews and service transitions.
- Use insights to inform care planning and team discussions (with consent).
- Keep the person's own words central in plans and handovers.
- Revisit when circumstances change, rather than trying to cover everything at once.

Having conversations about physical health

Talking about physical health can feel personal and complex, shaped by past experiences, culture and individual preferences. These conversations work best when they feel safe, respectful and collaborative, and when the person has choice and control over what is discussed and at what pace. Using the prompt is not about completing a form – it's about creating space for the person to share what matters most in a way that feels right for them.

Supportive phrases:

'Would you like me to rephrase that in a way that feels clearer or more comfortable?'

'We can use words that feel right for you – just let me know if something doesn't fit.'

'It sounds like you've found ways that work for you – what's been most helpful?'

'Lots of people find health checks hard to get to. If any feel relevant, we can look at ways to make them easier.'

Practice tips



- Follow the person's lead – let their priorities guide the conversation
- Be mindful that discussing physical health can feel overwhelming for some people
- Rephrase or simplify questions if they seem unclear or too clinical
- Provide prompts when needed to help the person respond
- Start with familiar topics and build gradually into other areas
- Emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers
- Use multiple sessions if needed – don't rush the process
- Notice your own discomfort and avoid letting it influence the person's comfort
- Practise asking questions with a supervisor or colleague
- Reflect and validate – acknowledge what's important to them in their own words
- Use active listening skills – summarise, paraphrase, and check understanding
- Highlight strengths and resources – celebrate what's working well
- Offer options, not directives – frame next steps as choices

Follow-up and support

Follow-up is where the prompt can create real impact. It turns conversations about health into action that supports the person's priorities. Any 'No' response may indicate an area for follow-up, but next steps should always be led by the person and focused on what matters most to them.

Start by exploring priorities

The open-ended questions in section five can guide the conversation:

'From what we've talked about, what feels most important for you right now?'

Turning insights into action

Follow-up support should explore practical steps that feel achievable and relevant to the person. This might include supporting them to book a GP appointment, arrange a medication review, or connect with specialist health services. You can also help prepare questions for health appointments, so they feel confident and informed.

Knowing local health services is essential for effective follow-up. Staff should use their service directory to identify accessible options such as GPs, community health centres, dental clinics and culturally safe providers. Where possible, facilitate warm referrals rather than simply providing contact details, so the person feels supported through transitions.

Encouraging the person to take their completed prompt to appointments can strengthen self-advocacy and help health professionals understand their priorities.



Practice tips



Always work within your service context and scope of practice

Plan together – agree who will do what and when

Check consent before sharing information or making referrals

Document priorities and actions clearly; check in regularly and adjust as needed

Respond immediately to urgent concerns (such as chest pain) following organisational protocols

Always work within your service context and scope of practice

Use warm referrals rather than just providing contact details

Supportive phrases:

‘Would you like me to help book that, or would you prefer to do it yourself and I’ll check in next week?’

‘What would make this next step feel easier for you?’

‘Would you like me to go through some options with you, or do you have something in mind already?’

‘Is there anyone you’d like involved in planning these next steps?’

For broader health information and national programs, refer to the [Neami Health Prompt National Resource Guide](#). This guide includes trusted links for preventive screening, chronic condition management, gender-affirming care, and wellbeing resources. Combining these national resources with local pathways ensures people receive accurate information and practical support tailored to their needs.



Inclusive and culturally responsive practice

Health conversations work best when they feel safe, respectful, and affirming for every person. People may have different needs based on culture, faith, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or past experiences. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, health is holistic – it includes physical, social, emotional, cultural, and spiritual wellbeing, and connection to country and community.

When using the Health Prompt, adapt conversations to reflect each person’s identity, preferences, and health beliefs and experiences. This means being mindful of language, avoiding assumptions, and creating space for choice and autonomy. It also means considering barriers such as discrimination, stigma, health literacy, or previous negative experiences with health services.



Practice tips



Respect comfort and choice – check what feels safe and relevant before continuing

Use inclusive, affirming language – avoid assumptions about identity, body, or health needs

Be aware of your own biases – reflect on how they may influence the conversation

Offer culturally appropriate options – such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, LGBTQIA+ health supports, community centres and services specialised in working with culturally diverse communities.

Consider accessibility – use plain language, visual aids, and interpreters where needed

Support gender affirmation – ask about and use correct pronouns and avoid any assumptions about a person's body and anatomy

Encourage access to programs – such as Closing the Gap PBS Co-payment Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Check for communication and access needs – ask if the person would like information in a different format (such as visual aids or plain language) and whether they need language support via an interpreter or have cultural or faith-based preferences



Further support and training

Good physical health is strongly linked to mental health and wellbeing, and conversations about physical health can play an important role in supporting recovery, quality of life, and self-defined goals.

To build confidence in having physical health conversations, staff can access free, evidence-based modules through the Mental Health Professional Online Development Program (MHPOD). These modules include content on physical health and wellbeing in mental health settings and practical strategies for person-led conversations.

Relevant MHPOD learning modules include:

- Physical health needs of people living with mental health conditions
- Long-term health conditions and mental health
- Mental health promotion, illness prevention and early intervention
- Eating disorders

The training available by MHPOD can be paired with other training or coaching that support embedding practice skills such as:

- Using inclusive, affirming language
- Active listening and collaborative problem-solving
- Supporting self-advocacy and health literacy
- Navigating local referral pathways and facilitating warm handovers

Services are encouraged to integrate the Health Prompt into orientation and ongoing professional development, ensuring staff feel equipped to use the tool in a way that reflects trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and person-led principles.



More information

If you have any questions about using the Health Prompt, this practice guide or would like to discuss how it can support your work, contact:

Neami National

4–8 Water Road
Preston Vic 3072

P 03 8691 5300

F 03 8678 1106

E practice@neaminational.org.au

neaminational.org.au/healthprompt/

