

HEALTH: THE IMPORTANCE OF WELL-BEING

(physical, emotional and social)



The “Informa em Ação” project was developed to enable more effective access for people of diverse backgrounds and migrants by gathering and compiling information of relevance. Translation in various languages was developed through mediation focussing on perception of concepts by people from different origins and National Health Service professionals, side-by-side, engaged in a process that envisioned building and sharing understanding through the lens of different cultural frameworks, by using cultural mediation and dialogic tools.

The formal partner of this project is GAT - Grupo de Ativistas em Tratamentos, and non-formal partners include ACeS Lisboa Central (Central Lisbon Health Units cluster) and GABIP Almirante Reis (promoted by Lisbon Municipality, Aga Khan Foundation Portugal and Arroios Borough). Translations were carried out by partners and community groups, who actively participated in the development process for this production in the following languages: Bengali, English, French, Mandarin, Nepali, and Portuguese.



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A. WHAT IS (PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL) WELL-BEING?

As the World Health Organisation (WHO) outlines, Health includes the concept of well-being within its definition: “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of illness or infirmity.”

Well-being is a satisfactory state in which a person feels good, both physically and emotionally.

Relationships with our family, friends, work colleagues, and others influence our well-being and, therefore, our health, alongside with nutrition, work we engage in, sleeping patterns, and spare time activities.

Some situations can be particularly challenging and may have a significant impact on our well-being. Examples may be: losing someone close to us, grieving; pregnancy and post-partum; unemployment; moving to a new country, where we may need to adapt to new cultures, a new language, job, interaction styles and new social relationship dynamics, dealing with being away from our family or loved ones, often experiencing loneliness.

Such challenges can trigger different types of emotions, some of which may be uncomfortable or unwanted, making us feel worried, sad, nervous, irritable, guilty, or provoking a loss of energy, tiredness, difficulties in concentrating, lack of joy in daily activities, changes

in our sense of appetite and difficulties sleeping.

Physical symptoms are also common: headaches, neck pain, shoulders and backache (due to muscle tension), tummy ache and changes in our intestinal transit, and at times a sense of needing air and feeling pain in our chest.

At times, these feelings may cause great suffering and interfere with daily activities.



B. HOW TO FOSTER WELL-BEING?

Daily care and activities foster well-being, prevent or reduce suffering and uncomfortable physical sensations.



A balanced and varied diet



Sleeping enough hours to suit your personal physical need, preferably maintaining your mobile off or in silent mode



Physical exercise, ideally for a total of at least 2 and a half hours throughout the week



Interacting with people whom you feel close to and with whom you feel comfortable and valued



Going back to practicing or Learning a new activity such as, for example, a new sport or language, cooking, etc.



Practicing, in a group or by yourself, an activity that makes you feel good, for example walking, running, swimming, yoga, dancing, writing, drawing, etc.



Avoiding excessive alcohol and coffee consumption



Avoiding tobacco and drugs

C. HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT WHAT I FEEL?

Shame, fear, denial, and a sense of guilt may stop individuals from seeking help when they most need it. Dealing with these emotions and uncomfortable feelings may be hard.

You do not need to suffer alone in silence.



It is good to talk to someone close to you, whom you trust. You can always talk to a health professional too.

D IS IT IMPORTANT TO SPEAK WITH A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL?

There are times when dealing with certain experiences or life changes seems particularly difficult and you may benefit from talking to a health professional.

It is important to consult a health professional if:

- Feeling unusually bored, anxious, agitated, irritable, or in a bad mood
- Having trouble sleeping and it affects your daily well-being
- Losing interest in socialising with the usual people, and isolating yourself, skipping school/ university/ work
- Experiencing a sense of despair, disorientation and feeling useless, at times thinking it is not worth living
- Using drugs or alcohol to try and forget your symptoms or problems
- Encountering worries, feelings and thoughts you struggle to share / talk about with someone else, due to concern of not being understood or that the other person may think is strange
- Having thoughts about self-harming.



You can get further information on payment (or exemption) for consults from the administrative services at the Health Unit. The fee (tax) or exemption to be seen by a professional in Portugal varies according to different circumstances (country of origin/ migration, time you have been a resident in Portugal, pregnancy, etc.).

You can ask to see a family doctor and talk to a health professional at the health centre you are enrolled at, or at the one that is closest to your area of residence. You can take a friend or family member you trust to the consult if you wish so and if it makes you feel more comfortable.

To get information in Portuguese about health care for migrants within the National Health Service “Serviço Nacional de Saúde (SNS)” visit the following websites:

www.sns.gov.pt | www.dgs.pt | www.acss.min-saude.pt | www.ers.pt

The doctor may offer suggestions that help you deal with what you are feeling. When necessary, they may prescribe medication and/or refer you to another health professional, such as for example a psychologist, psychiatrist, and/ or social worker. If you have any doubts or feel you are not getting better with the treatment suggested, please talk to your doctor again.

When talking to a health professional, try to be as open and honest as possible. Health professionals are obliged to fulfil an ethical code of conduct (“Código deontológico”) which includes their duty to maintain professional secrecy. Therefore, all information shared between yourself and the health organisation is confidential.

If you feel you need medication, talk to your doctor about it. The decision about whether it may be necessary or not, and how long medication should be taken for, needs to be ascertained by a doctor. The medication prescribed (if any) shall be adapted to your personal situation and is just meant for you individually.

E • WHAT ARE ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION?

Most people are due to experience sadness and feeling anxious or nervous at times, especially when going through difficult situations. Usually, these feelings fade away after a few days. However, when the feelings persist continuously over a longer period of time and their intensity affects your daily life, particularly relationships with friends, family members or work, it may be due to depression or anxiety disorder.

Anxiety and depression may provoke difficulties in concentrating, loss of appetite, a feeling of despair, changes in sleeping patterns such as hyper sleepiness or insomnia, lack of pleasure in performing daily activities, sense of guilt, or thoughts about death. Physical symptoms such as palpitations and/or chest pain, headache, pain in the neck and shoulders, tummy ache, and at times diarrhoea, can also occur.

In such cases, a Health professional's assessment is crucial and will allow them to guide you through how to get better.

F • WHAT CAN I DO WHEN SOMEONE IS SUFFERING?

Frequently friends, family members, children, colleagues, neighbours go through emotional suffering and need support, yet they may not acknowledge symptoms or may not seek for help due to shame, fear or denial.

At times, suffering manifests itself through gradual or sudden changes in behaviour at home or outside, at school or at work.

If you notice someone is unwell, try to reach out and offer support, showing empathy and availability throughout these difficult times. Family and friend(s) are very important in this process. Do not underestimate by saying "it will soon pass", "you need to be brave", "you mustn't be sad".



OTHER RESOURCES

At times, people who are new to the country and migrants, are not familiar with the bureaucratic processes and systems in Portugal. A number of Associations and Grassroots organisations support migrants by offering information and/or orienteering on specialised services available either at their own or at other institutions, or other relevant contacts and networks.

USEFUL CONTACTS:

SNS24 - National Health Service Contact Centre **(Serviço Nacional de Saúde)**

Tel. (+351) 808 242 424 (cost of a local phone call)

Telephone and online support (<https://www.sns24.gov.pt/en/>), offering guidance over the phone on any health problem. Available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

São José Hospital Psychiatry Emergency Service (Serviço de Urgência de Psiquiatria no Hospital de São José)

Tel. (+351) 218 841 000

Address: Rua José António Serrano, 1150-199 Lisbon

Available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, for critical situations that cannot wait for Health Centre assessment.

Estefânia Hospital Child Psychiatry Emergency Service (Serviço de Urgência de Pedopsiquiatria no Hospital Dona Estefânia)

Tel. (+351) 213 126 666

Address: Rua Jacinta Marto, 1169-045 Lisbon

www.sns.gov.pt | www.dgs.pt | www.acss.min-saude.pt | www.ers.pt