

## The primary and secondary healthcare domain and physical activity

### Key messages

- Counselling by a general practitioner (GP) or other health professional, properly implemented, is one of the best buys for promoting physical activity. It is highly effective and cost-effective.
- Discussion of physical activity should be a critical component of all clinical care for all patients.
- Health professionals need more support and resources to promote physical activity in their communities.
- Policy change is needed to elevate the importance of physical activity in routine practice, upskill the healthcare workforce, and build organisational capacity for delivering physical activity interventions.

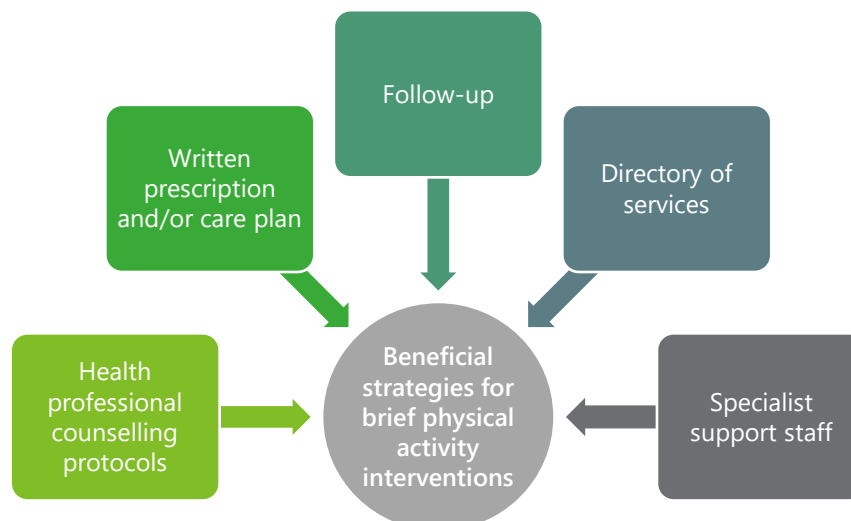
### What is the role of healthcare providers in physical activity promotion?

Primary and secondary healthcare providers are at the forefront of direct, one-to-one provision of information, advice and support for physical activity in Australia. They also deal with the consequences of chronic disease every day.



### What works?

Beneficial elements that can support or be incorporated into brief physical activity interventions include the following.



## What are the recommendations for investment and action?

### Leadership

(Departments of health, professional associations, credentialling bodies, non-government public health organisations)

- Increase understanding that physical activity promotion is an essential and evidence-based component of health service provision
- Help shift awareness and attitudes towards physical activity as an issue relevant to many areas of clinical care by developing and disseminating consensus statements and practice guidelines

### Skill development

(Pre- and in-service)

- Provide foundational education in physical activity assessment, prescription and counselling in university courses for health professionals, incorporating behaviour change models and practice-based learning
- Provide professional development to improve knowledge and skills in physical activity prescription for different health conditions, models of multidisciplinary care, and systems to support physical activity integration into practice

### Organisational change

- Improve quality and efficiency of physical activity advice and counselling through enabling elements such as practice systems that embed physical activity advice and counselling within day-to-day service delivery
- Encourage widespread adoption of enabling elements through accreditation standards and incentive schemes

### Financial support

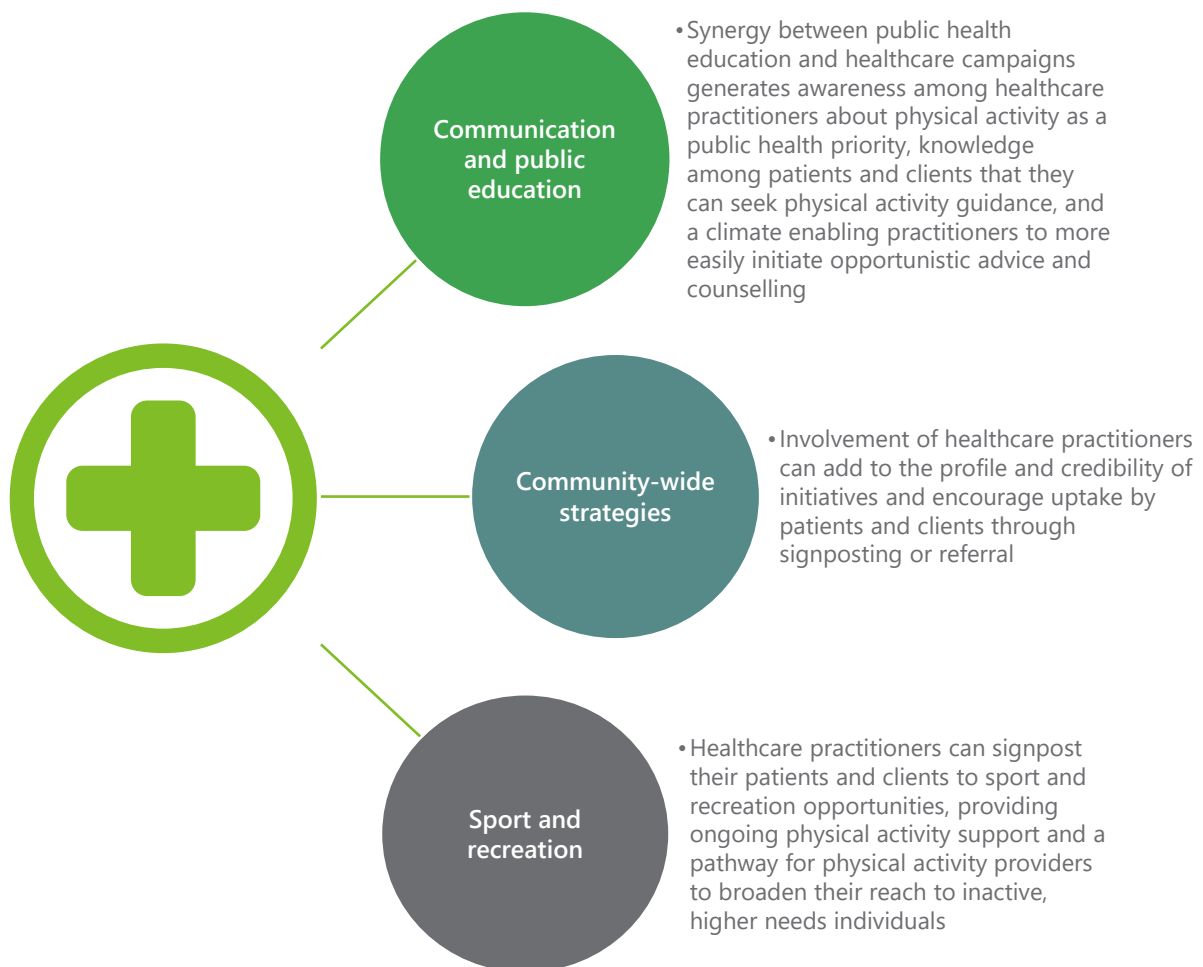
- Maintain General Practice Management Plans and Team Care Arrangements to enable multidisciplinary engagement in physical activity prescription, support and intervention
- Improve practitioner readiness and capacity to address physical activity within routine service delivery through government-funded resources and training opportunities

### Partnerships

(Healthcare and providers of physical activity facilities and programs)

- Support the signposting of initiatives to patients and clients through communication and information sharing between healthcare practitioners and physical activity providers
- Encourage partnerships between physical activity providers and health practitioners with specialist skills in exercise prescription to assist the suitable design and adaptation of physical activity opportunities for those with particular needs and/or limitations

## What are examples of strategies that intersect with the healthcare domain?



**Getting Australia Active III (GAA III)** is an Australian guide for policy makers to support the implementation of a whole-of-systems approach to increasing population physical activity. This policy brief summarises key points from **Chapter 3.4** of this guide. For more detailed guidance and supporting evidence, you can access the full report at: [preventioncentre.org.au](http://preventioncentre.org.au)



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