



POLICY ON PUBLIC HEALTH

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This document is a policy of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) and relates to the role of emergency departments in supporting public health initiatives.

The policy is applicable to both public and private hospital emergency departments throughout Australasia.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

2.1. Definition

ACEM defines Emergency Medicine thus:

Emergency medicine is a field of practice based on the knowledge and skills required for the prevention, diagnosis and management of acute and urgent aspects of illness and injury affecting patients of all age groups with a full spectrum of episodic undifferentiated physical and behavioural disorders; it further encompasses an understanding of the development of pre-hospital and in-hospital emergency medical systems and the skills necessary for this development. (International Federation for Emergency Medicine 1991)

3. PROCEDURES AND ACTIONS

ACEM recognises and endorses an active role for emergency departments in national and international strategies aimed at emphasising the prevention of illness and injury and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

All emergency departments should take every opportunity and be resourced to promote public health and the prevention of illness and injury through the display and provision of health promotion materials, and the provision of advice and guidance to patients. Emergency departments should have clinical procedures in place which ensure that every clinical contact is an opportunity to promote health and prevent illness and injury.

This includes participation in the following activities:

- Screening for drug and alcohol misuse, and undertaking brief interventions where appropriate
- Screening for family violence
- Establishing linkages with support services which address social determinants of health (e.g. drug and alcohol services, housing assistance services, family violence support services etc.)
- Promoting smoking cessation
- Promoting healthy eating and exercise programs

ACEM will assist and partner with other organisations whose purpose is the promotion of health and the prevention of illness and injury.

ACEM will maintain a Public Health Committee which will be responsible for the development of policies and guidelines relating to public health issues and liaise with public health organisations to explore opportunities for collaboration on health promotion and the prevention of illness and injury.

4. DOCUMENT REVIEW

Timeframe for review: every five (5) years, or earlier if required.

1.1 Responsibilities

Document authorisation: Council of Advocacy, Practice & Partnerships
 Document implementation: Public Health Committee
 Document maintenance: Policy and Research Department

1.2 Revision History

Version	Date of Version	Pages revised / Brief Explanation of Revision
v1	Jul-2009	Approved by Council
v2	Jul-2009	Approved by Council
v3	May-2015	Content removed from Policy Context section and transferred to Procedures and Actions section. Procedures and Actions section expanded to include the ways in which public health can be promoted.