

WHO Guideline on Self-Care Interventions for Health and Well-Being



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World Health
Organization



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This publication is the update of the Guidelines published in 2019 entitled “WHO consolidated guideline on self-care interventions for health: sexual and reproductive health and rights”. This publication also expands the scope of the 2019 Guidelines.

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The Web Annex, containing the summary tables of the evaluations of the evidence for this guideline, is available at <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/342654/9789240031326-eng.pdf>.

The interactive web-based version of this living guideline is available at <https://app.magicapp.org/#/guideline/Lr21gL>.

SMART Guidelines on self-care interventions for antenatal care, family planning, HIV and other topics is available under: <https://www.who.int/teams/digital-health-and-innovation/smart-guidelines>

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PREFACE

I am driven by the conviction that everyone has a right to health. But today, at least half the world's population has no access to essential health services. The provider-to-client model that is at the heart of health systems must be complemented with a self-care model through which people are enabled to make active, informed health decisions to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health worker. Many health issues can already be diagnosed and managed through self-care interventions, and the list continues to grow.



People have been practising self-care for millennia, and new diagnostics, medicines, and interventions, including digital technologies, are changing how health services can be delivered. Self-care and self-care interventions have also played a critical role in individual, community and national responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the context of overstretched health systems and shortages of qualified health workers, self-care interventions, prioritized by the World Health Organization (WHO), have contributed to improving health and well-being.

Self-care must work as an extension of the health system, so that while people are using self-care interventions, they can also access the health system and community support for further assistance when needed. It is also important that self-care occurs in a safe and supportive environment, to avoid the stigma, violence and negative health outcomes that can often occur when seeking care in isolation.

This guideline on self-care interventions is based on the core principles of universal health coverage, including a people-centred approach to health that views people as active decision-makers in their own health, not merely passive recipients of health services.

People-centred approaches to healthcare also support health literacy, including digital literacy, so that people can take charge of their own health with evidence-based self-care interventions. This guideline can play an important role in helping people both to access safe and effective self-care interventions and to

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