

## Physical Disease and Mental Illness

Among individuals with serious mental illness, physical health problems including cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders, infectious diseases, respiratory illnesses, and sexual dysfunction occur with greater frequency, especially when compared to the general population. Furthermore, individuals with serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder have a greater relative risk of modifiable risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Relative risk is defined as the ratio of the probability of a particular event occurring in one group compared to the probability of that same event occurring in a comparison group.

In this section, the guidelines provide an overview of the physical ailments that occur with greater frequency among individuals with serious mental illness, review psychiatric medication side-effects that may contribute to or exacerbate these physical conditions, and provide monitoring recommendations in order to better evaluate and treat these physical health issues with the goal of better health outcomes.

**Note: Strongly recommend coordination of care between all providers to facilitate optimal outcomes.**

**Table 6.**

Modifiable Risk Factors for Cardiovascular Disease				
Modifiable Risk Factors	Schizophrenia		Bipolar Disorder	
	Prevalence rate	Relative risk	Prevalence rate	Relative risk
Smoking	50–80%	2–3 times the risk	54–68%	2–3 times the risk
Obesity	45–55%	1.5–2 times the risk	21–49%	1–2 times the risk
Metabolic Syndrome	37–63%	2–3 times the risk	30–49%	2–3 times the risk
Dyslipidemia	25–69%	≤ 5 times the risk	23–38%	≤ 3 time the risk
Hypertension	19–58%	2–3 times the risk	35–61%	2–3 times the risk
Diabetes Mellitus	10–15%	2–3 times the risk	8–17%	1.5–3 times the risk

*Adapted from Hert, et al., 2011a. Physical Illness in patients with severe mental disorders: I. Prevalence, impact of medications and disparities in health care. World Psychiatry, 10(1): 52–77.*

*Note. The relative risk is compared to the general population.*

## Physical Disease and Mental Illness (*continued*)

### Box 2.

#### Physical Diseases with Increased Frequency in Individuals with Serious Mental Illness

**Cardiovascular diseases** – stroke, myocardial infarction, hypertension, other cardiac and vascular diseases

**Nutritional and metabolic diseases** – obesity, hyperlipidemia, metabolic syndrome, diabetes mellitus

**Bacterial infections and mycoses** – tuberculosis

**Viral diseases** – HIV, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C

**Neoplasms** – obesity-related cancers (e.g., breast, stomach)\* and smoking-related cancers (e.g., lung)

**Dental problems** – gingivitis, dental caries, dry mouth

**Respiratory tract diseases** – COPD, impaired lung function

**Urological conditions and male reproductive issues** – sexual dysfunction

**Female reproductive issues and pregnancy complications** – obstetric complications, sexual dysfunction

*Adapted from Hert, et al., 2011a.*

*\*Note: Evidence regarding obesity-related cancers is conflicting; some studies indicate similar incidence of these cancers to the general population but with increased mortality among individuals with SMI, while other reports indicate increased rates of obesity-related cancers among individuals with SMI.*