

WEIGHT STIGMA & THE HEALTH CARE CLINIC

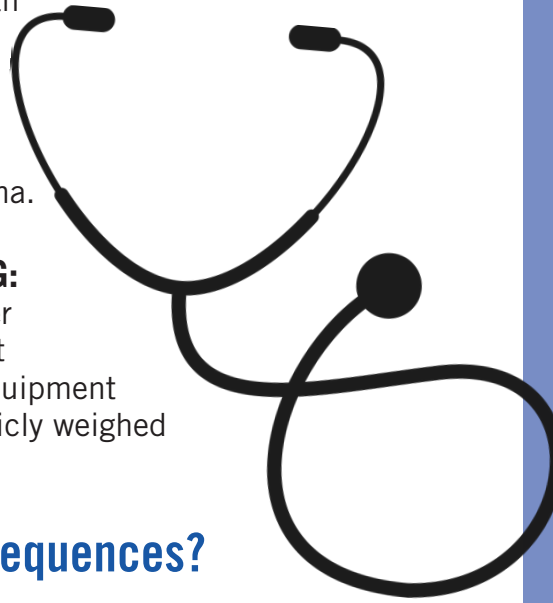


What is weight stigma?

Negative bias that health care providers may hold in relation to patients with overweight or obesity, including viewing these patients as lazy, lacking in self control, unpleasant, non-compliant or less desirable to care for contributes to weight stigma.

EXAMPLES IN A CLINIC SETTING:

- ▶ Disrespect from staff or provider
- ▶ Unsolicited advice to lose weight
- ▶ Inappropriately sized medical equipment
- ▶ Embarrassment from being publicly weighed



What are the health consequences?



Decreased physical activity



Unhealthy eating behaviors



Lower academic outcomes



Worsening obesity

MORE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF WEIGHT STIGMA:

- Lower quality of care
- Higher rates of social isolation
- Poor body image and low self-esteem
- Depression
- Other emotional and psychological effects

Parents of children with obesity feel blamed or dismissed, often leading to cancelled appointments and delayed care.

SOURCE: Pont SJ, Puhl R, Cook SR, et al, AAP SECTION ON OBESITY, THE OBESITY SOCIETY. Stigma Experienced by Children and Adolescents With Obesity. *Pediatrics*. 2017;140(6):e20173034

MORE RESOURCES AVAILABLE:



IOWA
MEDICAL
SOCIETY



BEST PRACTICES

Environmental Assessment:

- ▶ Expect respectful attitudes from providers and staff
- ▶ Assure relevant training for staff
- ▶ Ensure sturdy armless chairs with ample spacing
- ▶ Ensure uniforms, gowns, etc. in a variety of sizes
- ▶ Eliminate stigmatizing posters, reading materials, media, etc.
- ▶ Ensure equipment is sized appropriately

Weighing & Measuring Youth:

- ▶ Weigh patients in private space to protect confidentiality
- ▶ Use a phrase such as: "We need to check your growth."
- ▶ Let them know: "You can stand facing away from the scale."
- ▶ Record measurements without making any comments about height or weight
- ▶ In a clinical setting, say: "Your provider will review your child's measurements and any concerns you may have."

If Required to Measure BMI:

- ▶ Remember: BMI is a screening tool, not a diagnosis
- ▶ Ask permission to have a conversation about health
- ▶ Choose your words wisely:

Consider using:

- ✓ Height
- ✓ Weight
- ✓ BMI
- ✓ Growth

Avoid:

- ✗ Fat
- ✗ Obese
- ✗ Overweight
- ✗ Chubby