

CREATING A WELCOMING AND SAFE OFFICE ENVIRONMENT

Ensure that your clinic or medical office is well-equipped to accommodate patients with larger body sizes. Providing a safe and welcoming environment can improve patient care, reduce patient experiences of stigma, and eliminate unnecessary barriers that may otherwise deter patients from seeking care.

Equipment and Facilities

It is important that appropriate equipment is available to accommodate and accurately assess patients with high weight. This includes the following:

- Large, sturdy chairs and/or benches in waiting areas and examination rooms that can accommodate patients and visitors with large body sizes
- Sturdy step stools in examination rooms
- Large examination tables with proper width and weight capacity
- Extra-large examination gowns in every examination room
- Extra-large adult-sized blood pressure cuffs in every examination room
- High capacity scales that can support >500 lbs
- Extra long phlebotomy needles and tourniquets
- Floor-mounted toilets
- Sturdy grab bars in bathrooms
- Doors and hallways that accommodate large size wheelchairs, walkers, scooters

Relevant Published Research Citations

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Sensitive and Respectful Weighing Procedures

For many patients, being weighed creates feelings of anxiety, shame, and/or embarrassment. Additionally, patients may have had stigmatizing healthcare experiences in the past and feel uncomfortable being weighed. It is important to approach weighing procedures in a sensitive and respectful manner.

- Consider whether it is necessary to measure the patient's weight by reviewing his/her medical chart.
- Ask the patient's permission to be weighed, by asking "May we measure your weight today?"
- Be respectful if the patient decides not to be weighed.
- Ensure that the scale is located in a private area, where the patient can be weighed in privacy.
- For patients who give permission to be weighed, offer them the option for blind weighing (facing away from the scale) if they prefer.
- Record the patient's weight without judgment (e.g., no negative comments or facial expressions)
- Ask the patient whether or not they would like to be informed of how much they weigh.
- Ensure that the healthcare team is trained on implementing sensitive weighing procedures.

Staff Training and Education

Training and educating providers and staff about weight stigma and obesity as a chronic disease can help minimize weight stigma in healthcare encounters.

- Provide in-service education for all personnel (healthcare providers, medical assistants, front desk employees, and back office workers).
- Provide training on strategies to eliminate stigma and foster supportive and respectful communication with patients of all body sizes.

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Clinic Assessment Checklist

Waiting Room and Common Areas

- Large, sturdy chairs (preferably armless) or benches that can accommodate patients and visitors with large body sizes
- Doors and hallways that accommodate large size wheelchairs, walkers, scooters
- Weight-sensitive reading materials in waiting area
- Bathrooms that are wheelchair accessible
- Floor-mounted/pedestal toilets in bathrooms
- Sturdy grab bars in bathrooms

Examination Room

- Sturdy step stools
- Large sturdy chairs
- Large examination tables with proper width and weight capacity
- Extra-large examination gowns
- Extra-large adult-sized arm and thigh blood pressure cuffs
- Extra long phlebotomy needles and tourniquets

Scale

- Accurate, high capacity scale that can support >500 lbs
- Wide platform with handles for support during weighing
- Accessible for patients with disabilities
- Situated in a private area
- Staff trained in sensitive weighing procedures

Staff Training

- Healthcare providers assess their own potential for weight bias
- Staff is educated about the needs of patients with obesity to promote their understanding, sensitivity and respect of this patient population
- Office staff is trained on strategies to eliminate stigma and foster supportive and respectful communication with patients of all body sizes

Relevant Published Research Citations