



QUICK GUIDE:

## Safe, inclusive and accessible environments for people with obesity

Providing an inclusive environment that welcomes people of diverse shapes and sizes can help patients feel safer in accessing healthcare. Many people with obesity have had negative experiences in the healthcare system and in some cases, this has become a barrier to health care outcomes as the patient feels less comfortable returning for checkups, screening, and illness or injuries.

This quick guide aims to help healthcare professionals (HCPs) consider **opportunities to create a more welcoming environment for people with obesity**, in addition to other diversity considerations like cultural and gender. This guide was developed with input from primary care, obesity and lived experience experts.

### Entering a clinic

- Is the waiting room easy to access and navigate around the room for someone who has a larger body? This may include wheelchair accessibility and wide doors
- Are there comfortable and sturdy seats available for patients with obesity and their families in the waiting room and consultation rooms? Bariatric chairs have increased width and weight capacities (usually 150 kg+) and offer reassurance for people with larger bodies. It may be helpful and less embarrassing to have more than one chair available with consideration made as to its location.
- Are the toilet accessibility aids suitable for patients in larger bodies, including considerations for reinforced grab rails, wall-mounted toilets, and have wider stalls? (would disability toilets suffice?)
- Is the receptionist trained in awareness of potential challenges and anxieties that people with obesity may have? Have they considered potential biases they may have?
- Are there wheelchair and walker options available if needed?
- Are posters and other communications inclusive (e.g. website) with a range of people of various sizes and shapes?



## Consultation experiences

- Are bariatric examination couches available if patients need to lie down? With safe, stable steps available?
- Are larger gowns available and offered in a subtle way? Are patients able to choose a preferred size?
- High-capacity scales (150 kg+) could be used for weighing all patients as a standard to avoid a separate process. Is there a chance that the experience will cause embarrassment?
- Are larger blood pressure cuffs and measuring tapes available in each consultation room? Do the staff use these in a subtle and sensitive way?
- Would telehealth consultations be more of an option for some patients with mobility challenges?
- Have you considered how the patient might feel when they read the consultation and referral notes?



## Further resources

- The [Weight Issues Network Report](#) to better understand the lived experience perspective
- Obesity Canada's [Bariatric Friendly Health Care](#) resource page