

Weight Stigma in Healthcare

Having a higher BMI can make it harder to get quality healthcare. In recent years, growing numbers of doctors, patients, and researchers are talking about how focusing on weight loss as the main goal for a patient often does more harm than good.



If you feel you've experienced stigma due to your weight while accessing healthcare, here are some ways to advocate for yourself and get the care you need:

- **Come prepared with any questions or concerns about your health.** Being clear about your reason for the appointment might help the doctor stay focused on addressing your concerns.
- You have a right to get answers to your questions about your health and recommended treatments. If your doctor says your weight is causing your health concern, **you can ask why they think that and if there are other possible causes.**
- If you and your doctor decide together that weight loss should be a goal for you, **ask them for help creating a personalized plan and accessing additional support resources.** Share what hasn't worked for you in the past. And ask what the treatment plan will be if you're not able to lose weight.
- If you feel your doctor isn't respecting you or your health concerns, **don't be afraid to broach the topic of weight stigma.** You can say something like, "I've heard that doctors can sometimes miss diagnoses or treatments when they only focus on weight loss. I want to make sure that's not happening to me."
- **It's always okay to find a new doctor.** If you've tried these techniques and you're still feeling disrespected or uncomfortable, look for recommendations for a new doctor from family and friends or online.

References

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