

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A MEDICAL CONSULTATION



BEFORE THE CONSULTATION:

Gather information about the HCP's attitude; select your caregiver according to his/her reputation for respect towards people living with obesity if possible.

PREPARE A LIST OF SPECIFIC QUESTIONS YOU WANT ANSWERS TO:

- What is important for ME today — especially if the weight is not the reason I'm coming in ?
- What do I need help with?
- What do I want to ask the doctor?
- What does the doctor need to know about me in order to help me?
- What do I need to hear from the doctor?
- What do I **not** need to hear from the doctor?
- What do I **not** want to talk about?
- Do I have specific accessibility needs around equipment so the doctor can examine me?

IF YOU DO WANT TO CONSULT THE DOCTOR ABOUT YOUR WEIGHT OR YOUR OBESITY START BY WRITING DOWN YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT YOUR WEIGHT:

- Next write down your ideas about what might have contributed to your weight gain.
- Then record your fears regarding obesity.
- Lastly, write down your expectations for the visit.
- You can bring a family member or friend along who can advocate for you.

DURING THE INTERVIEW:

As a patient, you have the right to refuse to answer and or initiate conversation about certain subjects and that includes Obesity – if this is not of your own will.

- As a patient you also have the right to refuse to answer stigmatising and/ or provocative questions and to question the legitimacy of inappropriate conversation or interrogation.
- Never let anyone disrespect you!

As a patient, you have the right to make a decision about everything that impacts you either psychologically or physically.

You can therefore refuse to answer embarrassing or inappropriate questions and to refuse medical examinations or investigations which you find inappropriate or make you uncomfortable.

You also have the right to ask for explanations and the implications of treatments or examinations recommended by a doctor for any pathologies.

YOUR HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONER SHOULD HAVE SUITABLE EQUIPMENT AND APPROACHES. IN PARTICULAR YOU CAN LOOK FOR:

- A scale that measures weight up to 200 kg.
- A blood pressure monitor with cuffs of an appropriate size to fit your arm.
- Examination table is wide enough to accommodate you.
- Chairs suitable to accommodate larger bodies in the waiting area, and preferably some without armrests.
- A discreet area for patient weighing.
- A warm and caring atmosphere.

AFTER THE CONSULTATION:

If you feel you have been stigmatised and discriminated against by a doctor or another healthcare professional, you should above all not feel guilty.

Stigma exists in the healthcare field; this is generally due to preconceived ideas and a lack of training. Indeed some health professionals do not understand the science of obesity and believe the patient to be personally responsible for his or her obesity.

Make a note of denigrating comments such as: *"You have no willpower, you should take care of yourself and lose weight. You just have to eat less and move more, it's easy!"*

Also note instances where an HCP ignores the reason for your consultation and focuses on weight. If you come in to a consultation for knee pain and leave with an appointment to see a dietician, one would assume that your experience of pain was not taken seriously at face value.