

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Nutrition Support Action Plan for Case Managers/Key Workers

Weight Management

What is overweight and obesity?

Excess body weight is a risk factor for a number of illnesses. These include heart disease, stroke, diabetes, hypertension and some cancers.

In simplest terms, weight gain occurs when dietary intake exceeds output. However, it is generally caused by a complex interplay between food, lifestyle, medication, and also, to a small extent, genes.

There is more to staying healthy than being a certain weight, size or body shape. However, there are ways to check to see if weight or body shape is putting your patient at higher health risk.

→ **Calculate body mass index (BMI):** This is weight, in kilograms, divided by height, in metres, squared.

BMI (kg/m ²)	Classification
< 18.5	Underweight
18.5 – 25	Healthy weight
25– 30	Overweight
30–35	Obese
>35	Severe obesity

For more information or for a BMI calculator, see:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/healthyactive/publishing.nsf/Content/your-bmi>

→ **Calculate waist circumference:** This should be measured midway between the lowest rib and the top of the hipbone. The tape measure should be firm but not tight. More information and activities can be found at <http://www.measureup.gov.au>

A large waist circumference indicates the storage of fat in the upper body (abdominal obesity). This is often referred to as 'apple' shape. It is associated with greater health risks. In contrast, 'pear shaped' (fat around the hips) carries much less risk.

Waist Circumference Measurements

	Increased risk	Greatly increased risk
Men	> 94 cm	> 102 cm
Women	>80 cm	> 88 cm

Medication and weight gain

Weight gain is well documented with medications such as atypical antipsychotics, although a range of different medication types have weight gain as a side-effect. This does not mean that there is no hope - early-intervention weight management is effective at slowing or preventing this weight gain in many patients and weight loss is possible.

What's the best weight loss approach?

'Dieting' and skipping meals is counter-productive. It causes a slowing of the basal metabolic rate.

Although it is important to reduce kilojoule intake, actual counting kilojoules is time consuming and does not encourage flexible attitudes to eating.

Effective weight management requires a commitment to healthier eating and being physically active. This can be achieved by gradual small changes towards a healthier lifestyle. Healthy eating includes both having good meal habits and enjoying a wide variety of foods.

Goals for weight loss

Gradual weight loss is best. A goal of ½ to 1kg a month is realistic and sustainable. Initial goal should be to prevent further weight gain. Focusing on the scales should be discouraged. Progress can be measured by changes to waist circumference, how clothes fit, or how your patient feels.

Actions for case manager/key worker

- Encourage realistic goals - focus on healthy eating and physical activity

The nutrition focus should be on:

- regular meals - *no dieting or skipping meals*
- choose unprocessed food often, including more fruit, vegetables and fibre
- a moderate amount of protein and carbohydrate (See the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating for more information on serve sizes and recommended daily serves www.eatforhealth.gov.au)
- more low glycemic index foods (See *NSAP: Diabetes Mellitus* for more information)
- less fat, particularly saturated fats - *this will make the biggest difference in most cases*
- less sugar, especially in drinks – limit or avoid juice, flavoured milk, soft drinks and/or added sugar in tea/coffee, - each can of regular soft drink, 375ml of flavoured milk or 375ml fruit juice contains over 8 teaspoons of sugar)
- drinking only small amounts of alcohol - *establish whether excess alcohol intake is a contributing factor to weight - if so, provide advice on reducing alcohol*

Physical activity: Thirty minutes a day of moderate-intensity physical activity is recommended. This can be in bouts of ten minutes at a time.

- Check BMI or waist circumference - *if above the recommendations, discuss the benefits of losing excess fat from the stomach area.*

- Tips for snacking - *See increased NSAP: increased appetite and/or overeating.*

Need more information or do you need to refer your patient for more individualised advice?

Find an Accredited Practising Dietitian on the Dietitians Association of Australia's website www.daa.asn.au (click on 'Find an APD') and use this informative website: <http://www.measureup.gov.au>