

Get the facts

Within health care settings, weight bias is a common experience for overweight patients. Studies have reported negative attitudes toward obese patients by:

- Physicians
- Nurses
- Psychologists
- Dietitians
- Medical students
- Health care professionals who specialize in obesity

Weight bias can take multiple forms in health care settings, and can be expressed in both subtle and overt ways. Here are some examples:

Provider Attitudes: Providers may express negative weight-based assumptions, stereotypes, or judgments about their overweight patients. Common attitudes include views that obese patients are lazy, lacking in self-discipline, and noncompliant.

Weighing Procedures: Being weighed is a sensitive experience for many overweight and obese patients. Providers who make negative comments or inappropriate facial gestures while weighing their patients are expressing weight bias, and this increases patients' embarrassment and shame.

Medical Equipment: In many health care settings, medical equipment is too small to be functional for obese patients. This includes a lack of appropriately-sized patient gowns, examination tables, blood pressure cuffs, speculum, and scales.

Office Environment: Health care environments can be unwelcoming to obese patients. This can occur for several reasons, including negative attitudes by office staff, waiting room chairs that are too small to be functional, and reading materials that stigmatize weight.

To learn more about weight bias, visit www.yaleruddcenter.org.

