

Sensitive weighing procedures

Being weighed is often embarrassing and anxiety-provoking for large patients. Facing the scale can be such a negative experience that it becomes a reason for patients to avoid seeking health care. Thus, it is extremely important that providers, nurses, and medical assistants use sensitivity in their weighing procedures.

First, before talking to a patient about weight, the provider needs to review the patient's chart for weight history, noting changes in weight between visits, and determining whether the patient need to be weighed. When approaching a patient who needs to be weighed, it is important to ask the patient for their permission to be weighed, and to use empathic, sensitive communication. Here are some examples of ways to initiate this procedure:

Would you like to be weighed today? Or: Do I have your permission to weigh you today?

Dr X likes me to ask all of his/her patients if it would be OK for me to weight and measure them. Would that be OK with you?

Would you prefer if I weighed you facing away from the scale?

Would you like to discuss your weight concerns with your doctor?

Second, it is important to maintain sensitivity during the actual weighing procedure. This includes the following guidelines:

Ensure that weighing procedures take place in a private location that protects confidentiality of patients.

Record the patient's weight without judgment or comments

Offer patients the choice of not seeing the results if they prefer

Consider: Is measuring weight truly necessary for acute visits or where weight has recently been recorded?