



THE CITY OF NEW YORK

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Michael R. Bloomberg

Mayor

Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.

Commissioner

nyc.gov/health

Dear Health Care Professional:

Overweight and obesity are epidemic in New York City and across the country. Half of adult New Yorkers—more than 3 million—are overweight or obese. Poor diet and a lack of physical activity, the primary causes of obesity, are second only to smoking as risk factors for early death.

As a health care provider, you can help address this epidemic by monitoring your patients' body mass index (BMI) and helping them achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Gradual changes in lifestyle can reduce their risk of obesity-related illnesses such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancers of the colon, breast, endometrium and prostate.

Even if a patient does not lose weight immediately, your support for behavior change can have a powerful long-term impact. Here, in brief, are the Health Department's recommendations:

- Take a weight history and calculate BMI for all adult patients.
- If BMI is elevated (≥ 25), discuss the risks of being obese, ask about diet and physical activity, and talk about the benefit of even a small weight loss. If the patient is not ready to lose weight, discuss a goal of no weight gain with healthy lifestyle changes.
- If a patient is ready to lose weight, help him or her set a realistic goal and develop a plan to achieve it.

We hope you will find the clinical tools, resources and patient education materials in this Action Kit useful. Your Health Department representative is visiting you to discuss ways of applying these methods and materials in your practice. Thank you for your dedication and contribution to the health of New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.

Commissioner

New York City Health Department