

Have You Ever Been a Target of Weight Bias?

What should you do if you feel that you have been treated unfairly because of your weight by a doctor, nurse, or other health care provider?

If you have experienced inappropriate negative attitudes, verbal comments, or other unfair actions due to your weight by a health care provider, there are several options to consider.

1. You may want to voice your concern to the Patient Advocate at your health care center. Before you voice your concerns, be ready to provide the following information:
 - a) The nature of your complaint (e.g., a description of the actions or comments by the provider towards you)
 - b) The names of people involved in the encounter
 - c) The medical department in which the problem occurred
 - d) The date on which the problem happened
 - e) Suggestions you have of how the Patient Advocate can help remedy the situation
2. If you don't feel comfortable talking to a Patient Advocate, try talking to a friend or family member about the incident. It can be very helpful to talk through a painful situation with someone you trust and who cares about you. Having support from a family member or friend can help you cope with the negative event and help you move on.
3. Depending on the situation that you experienced, you may also consider approaching the provider to express that your feelings were hurt by his/her comments or actions. If you do this, you may want to first write down the events that occurred and your feelings or concerns, so that you can clearly express yourself when having this conversation. It may also be helpful to ask the provider for suggestions of what steps can be taken to prevent a similar situation from happening again in the future.
4. Other forms of support may be available to you, which may be especially helpful if you feel down, depressed, or upset following the encounter. You may want to seek support from a psychologist or social worker, who can talk to you about your feelings and help you identify healthy strategies to cope with the situation. You may also consider joining a support group with other overweight individuals. It can be helpful to talk to others who may have experienced stigma in their own lives.