



# Northern Health Position on Health, Weight and Obesity

Northern Health seeks to optimize health and wellness and improve quality of life by promoting healthy lifestyles among all Northern residents. With attention to Northern Health's [Position on Healthy Eating](#) and the [Position on Sedentary Behaviour and Physical Inactivity](#), Northern Health will work with internal and external partners to support and promote a health-focused approach to body weight across the life cycle:

- **Health** can occur at a variety of sizes.
  - Support the development and maintenance of eating competence across the life cycle.
  - Promote enjoyable, active lives and support building lifestyles that integrate active transportation, active play and active family time.
  - Support the achievement of positive body image for all.
  - Support the message that *healthy bodies exist in a diversity of shapes and sizes*.
- **Weight** is not a complete and inclusive measure of health.
  - Support a health-promoting approach; prioritize reducing risk factors and weight-related complications.
  - Support optimal growth and development of children and youth.
  - In children and youth, support longitudinal growth monitoring as part of primary care. Weight divergence, particularly weight acceleration (rather than an absolute weight or percentile), requires further investigation.
  - Promote that all sizes are accepted and treated with respect.
  - Support that weight bias is a bullying issue; it may be overcome using awareness, education and other supportive measures.
  - Promote a do no harm approach in measures to support health at all sizes to prevent increases in negative body image, disordered eating and disordered activity.
- **Obesity** should be prevented, treated and managed using a do no harm approach.
  - Support and promote healthy eating: *make the healthy eating choice the easy choice*.
  - Support and promote active lifestyles: *make the active choice the easy choice*.
  - Support drawing attention to obesogenic environments where we live, work, learn, play and are cared for.
  - Support a graduated approach to healthy lifestyles; encourage actions toward improved health and well-being at all weights.
  - Support and promote the use of the Edmonton Obesity Staging System as a medical approach to manage obese patients.
  - Promote success as improved health and stabilized weight with attention to competent eating, active living and positive body image.

For further information, please refer to the complete **Northern Health Position on Health, Weight and Obesity** available on the Northern Health web site: [www.northernhealth.ca](http://www.northernhealth.ca) (About Us/Position Statements/Addressing Risk Factors), or by using the following address: <http://www.northernhealth.ca/AboutUs/PositionStatements.aspx>

PROBLEM	MULTIFACTORAL CAUSES	UNIQUE POPULATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ↑ obesity</li> <li>• ↑ sedentary behaviour</li> <li>• Weight reduction approaches are not working; are not usually evidence-informed</li> <li>• Lack of comprehensive supports for healthy living</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy imbalance</li> <li>• Genetics</li> <li>• Obesogenic environments</li> <li>• Chemicals, hormones and addictions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socioeconomic status (and related determinants of health)</li> <li>• Children and youth</li> <li>• Aboriginal peoples</li> <li>• Northern, rural and remote communities</li> <li>• Men</li> </ul>

**MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES**

Focus on improving health & achieving best weight	Obesity prevention is easier than management	Employ a do no harm approach (to avoid ↑ disordered eating/activity)	Address weight bias	BMI is a screening tool to be used cautiously
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Prenatal ➤ Infant ➤ Toddler/Preschool ➤ Adolescent ➤ Adult ➤ Senior ➤

**PREVENTION APPROACHES**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weight gain to support optimal fetal development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusive breast feeding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eating competence</li> <li>• Div. of responsibilities</li> <li>• Optimize growth &amp; development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable weight</li> <li>• Functional movement</li> <li>• Positive body image</li> </ul>
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**HEALTHY EATING AND ACTIVE LIVING**

**MANAGEMENT APPROACHES**

- Focus on health improvements
- If BMI >25, use **Edmonton Obesity Staging System** to predict (more reliably than BMI) an overweight or obese person's risk for death & degree to which intervention or support is required

STAGE 0	STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4
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**HEALTHY EATING AND ACTIVE LIVING**

- Follow a graduated approach with attention to the 5A's (Ask, Assess, Advise, Agree & Assist)

STABILIZE WEIGHT	➤	ADDRESS WEIGHT IF MEDICALLY NECESSARY	➤	MAINTAIN "BEST WEIGHT"
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## NORTHERN HEALTH POSITION

HEALTH CAN OCCUR AT A VARIETY OF SIZES	WEIGHT IS NOT AN INCLUSIVE & COMPLETE MEASURE OF HEALTH	OBESITY SHOULD BE PREVENTED, TREATED & MANAGED USING A DO NO HARM APPROACH
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