

Getting

STARTED IN YOUR PRACTICE

If you are looking for additional resources around childhood overweight and obesity, refer to page 6 of the Pediatric Obesity Clinical Decision Support Chart, located in the front cover of this toolkit.

The Getting Started in Your Practice Checklist, located next in the toolkit, provides concrete examples of how to successfully begin this work.

Prevention, assessment, management, and treatment of overweight and obesity are not like many of the other medical conditions your practice may have addressed in the past.

Addressing this growing challenge requires new techniques and skills. The words you use with your patients and families may need to be adjusted to reflect the sensitive nature of weight issues in our culture, and there really isn't a simple cure.

All of this may make your practice wary of starting this work; however, patients are looking to health care practices to help them. Practices don't need to take on the whole epidemic of obesity. *Let's Go!* is working across Maine communities to help patients and families make healthy choices.



Things to think about:

The focus is on healthy behaviors

It's important to remember that the focus should be on healthy behaviors and not weight for ALL children. Healthy behaviors include 5-2-1-0, setting structured mealtimes, eating less fast food, and getting enough sleep.

A team approach is essential

It's important to engage not only the medical and nursing staff but also the administrative staff. Using the team approach allows everyone to see value in the effort and have ownership over one or more of the steps.

Staff may have their own attitudes and beliefs around healthy behaviors and weight issues (physical activity, healthy eating, etc.)

Reinforce that this can be an uncomfortable topic, filled with culturally sensitive behaviors, emotions, and opinions. Help staff reflect on their own experiences working with patients and families around healthy behaviors and weight issues.

Think about your environment

Is your office promoting positive cues around healthy behaviors and weight? If not, try these:

- **Posters:** Add the *Let's Go!* poster to your waiting room and all exam rooms (a great way to start a conversation!).
- **Role model:** Wear a pedometer, drink water, go on walking meetings.
- **Food:** Serve healthy lunches at staff meetings and be conscious of snacks and drinks that may be observed by patients and families.

For more information on how to integrate movement and healthy eating into the work day, check out our Let's Go! Healthy Workplaces Toolkit. www.letsgo.org

Stigma/bias

Consider what your practice currently does to ensure that it is a safe, accepting, and suitable environment for providing care to patients who have overweight or obesity. Providing proper seating, medical equipment, and accommodations for these patients is an ethical responsibility. For more information on this topic, visit the UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity: <http://www.uconnruddcenter.org/>.

Incorporate the 5-2-1-0 Healthy Habits Questionnaire into your office work flow

This is one of the first things to institute in your practice at all well-child visits for children 2 years and older. This tool will help you focus on behaviors, not on weight, and engage in a respectful conversation with patients and families. More information on this can be found under the *Talk with Patients and Families* tab.

Screen and document body mass index (BMI) percentile for age/gender

Measuring BMI percentile is a good screening tool to identify children who may have an increased percentage of body fat. More information on this can be found under the *Measuring and Weighing* tab.

Talk with patients and families

This may require you to think differently about counseling patients. Remember, they don't necessarily need more information – they need to be guided in defining their own health goals and their willingness to change.

The language used is very important when working with patients and families on healthy behaviors. Be sure that you ask permission first and then focus on positive, healthy behaviors, not on weight.

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a useful tool when engaging in conversations. More information on MI can be found under the *Talk with Patients and Families* tab.

Distribute patient and family tools one at a time – based upon the patient's and family's areas of interest

Target one piece of the healthy lifestyle message. It is important not to overwhelm a patient and/or family with too much information. Setting small, achievable goals is most effective. A whole host of educational materials can be found under the *Parent Handouts* tab.

Explore your natural connections to the community – your voice matters

There are many opportunities for you and your office team to advocate for healthy eating and physical activity in your community (schools, child care centers, faith based organizations, etc.) and at the state and national level for policy changes. More information on advocacy can be found under the *Connect To Community* tab.