



**JOURNEY FOR PATIENTS WITH OBESITY**

# Questions to Ask Your Health Care Professional



When you visit your health care professional for a consultation about your weight, be sure to bring along a list of questions you want to ask. Here are some ideas.

## Your Weight

- Do I need to lose weight?
- What is a healthy goal weight for me?
- How long will it take for me to reach my healthy goal weight?
- What is a realistic goal weight for me in three months? Six months? One year?
- Do I have any medical conditions that might contribute to my weight or interfere with my ability to lose weight?
- Do I have any mental health conditions that might contribute to my weight or interfere with my ability to lose weight?
- Do I take any medications that might contribute to my weight or interfere with my ability to lose weight?
- Do I have lifestyle factors such as smoking, chronic stress, or sleep disorders that might contribute to my weight?
- Can you provide me with resources or referrals to help me quit smoking, manage stress, or improve my sleep?

## The Impact of Weight on Your Health

- How is my weight affecting my health?
- Do I have any weight-related medical conditions?
- In what ways might weight management improve my medical conditions or symptoms?
- How might my weight increase my risk of future medical conditions?
- Is my weight affecting my sleep?
- How much weight will I need to lose to see benefits to my medical conditions and symptoms?
- If I have obesity, which stage of obesity do I have?
- What treatment recommendations do you have for me?

## Diet and Physical Activity

- What changes should I make to my diet and eating habits?
- Do you recommend a specific eating plan, exercise plan, or weight management program for me?

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- Is the commercial weight management program I'm considering a safe and effective option?
- How many calories should I be eating each day?
- How many fewer calories should I eat in order to reach my weight management goals?
- What kind of physical activities should I do?
- How much exercise should I do?
- Are there any types of physical activities that I should avoid because of my medical conditions?
- Can you provide me with resources or referrals to help me improve my diet or become more physically active?
- I have a history of an eating disorder. Where can I turn for support and treatment?
- Can you recommend any support groups for people with obesity?

## Medications

- Should I consider any medication? If so, which ones?
- What are the pros and cons of the medication that you recommend?
- How does the medication work?
- Does the weight-management medicine you recommend have side effects? What are they? How likely am I to experience those side effects?
- How effective is the medicine you recommend?
- How much weight will I lose if I take medication?
- Will medication improve my weight-related medical conditions?
- Will I have to have any lab work, testing, or imaging before beginning to take medication?
- How long will I have to take medication?
- What will happen when I stop taking the medication?
- Does my health insurance cover the recommended medication? What would my copay be?
- What are my alternatives to medication?

## Weight-Related Behavior Changes

- What advice can you give me about how best to monitor my food and activity in a log or journal? Are there any apps you recommend?
- Can you recommend any resources, classes, groups, or experts who can help me learn about healthy eating, physical fitness, weight management, stress management, chronic disease management, stimulus control, or weight-related behavior change?
- What are some behavioral substitution strategies you can recommend?
- Can you recommend a behavioral therapist who can help me restructure my eating behaviors?

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### Obesity Surgery

- Should I consider obesity surgery? If so, which type?
- What are the pros and cons of obesity surgery?
- How effective is obesity surgery?
- How much weight will obesity surgery help me lose?
- Are some types of obesity surgery that are more effective than others?
- Will obesity surgery improve my weight-related medical conditions?
- If I have obesity surgery, would it require a hospital stay? If so, how long?
- What steps would I have to take to prepare myself for obesity surgery?
- How long does it take to recuperate after obesity surgery? When can I go back to work?
- What would I have to do to prepare myself for obesity surgery?
- Would I have to have a psychological evaluation before obesity surgery?
- Would I have to have any lab work, screening, or imaging before obesity surgery?
- Will I have pain after obesity surgery? How is post-surgical pain managed?
- If I have obesity surgery, what are the chances of me gaining back the weight I lose?

- What kind of shorter-term and longer-term diet changes are necessary after obesity surgery?
- Are there foods I will no longer be able to eat after obesity surgery?
- What kind of supplements will I have to take after obesity surgery?
- What kind of follow-up medical care is required after obesity surgery?
- Are there any long-term complications related to obesity surgery? If so, how likely am I to experience them?

### Motivation, Support, and Resources

- Do you have any advice for motivating myself to make weight-related lifestyle changes?
- How can you support me during my journey?
- What resources can you recommend for changing my diet? Increasing my physical activity? Boosting my motivation?
- What resources are available for addressing mental health issues related to issues such as obesity and disordered eating?
- What resources does your practice, my local hospital, or our community offer to support people on their obesity journey?
- What resources or assistance does our community offer for improving access to healthy foods?

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### Follow-Up Care

- Should I see any additional health care professionals who can help me manage my weight?
- Is there anything I should be doing differently to manage my chronic health conditions?
- How often should I make appointments for follow-up weight management visits with you?

### Questions to Ask Your Insurance Provider About Obesity Medication and Obesity Surgery

- Does my policy cover obesity medication/obesity surgery?
- What are my copays or deductibles for these treatments?
- If I have a yearly deductible, when does it reset each year? (Note: Deductibles do not necessarily reset each January.)
- What guidelines or requirements apply in order for my treatment to be covered?
- Are specific types of medication or surgery covered/not covered?
- Must I meet certain medical requirements to have my treatment covered? Must I have certain obesity-related health conditions or a minimum body mass index?
- If coverage is available only for “medically necessary” obesity treatment, what are the guidelines for “medical necessity”?
- If the treatment my health care professional recommends is not covered, is there an alternative treatment that is covered?
- Are there any steps I must take before being considered for coverage? (For example, an insurer may require you to attempt to lose weight for a certain period of time with a medically supervised weight-loss program before covering medication or surgery.)
- Must I see an approved or in-network health care professional in order for my treatment to be covered? If so, where can I find a list of approved/in-network providers?
- If I have more than one type of health insurance, how is coverage handled?
- Must I get preauthorization before treatment?
- If preauthorization is required, how do I go about getting it? What information or documentation is required? How long does it take to receive preauthorization?
- If I take obesity medication, is there a limit on how long it will be covered?
- Can I save money by filling an obesity medication prescription at a specific pharmacy?
- If I have obesity surgery, will every part of the procedure be covered? What will not be covered?

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- If I have obesity surgery, will in-patient care be covered, or must I have surgery on an outpatient basis? What if complications arise and I require hospitalization? Does coverage vary based on the type of facility in which I have surgery? Learn more about insurance coverage for bariatric surgery [here](#).
- What will be my maximum out-of-pocket costs for this treatment?
- Will follow-up appointments be covered? What will my copay be for follow-up appointments?
- What other restrictions should I know about?
- Is there a chance that my treatment coverage would be denied? If so, how would I go about appealing the denial? What is the likelihood that an appeal would be successful?
- What else should I know about insurance coverage for obesity treatment that I may not know to ask?
- Visit [The Obesity Action Coalition](#) for more insurance-related questions.

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