Health at Every Size (HAES)

Proposed Guidelines for Health Professionals

From the perspective of efficacy as well as ethics, body weight is a poor target for public health intervention. There is sufficient evidence to recommend a paradigm shift from conventional weight management to Health at Every Size. The following guidelines have been developed to assist professionals in implementing HAES.

- Interventions should meet ethical standards. They should focus on health, not weight, and should be referred to as "health promotion" and not marketed as "obesity prevention." Interventions should be careful to avoid weight-biased stigma, such as using language like "overweight" and "obesity."

- Interventions should seek to change major determinants of health that reside in inequitable social, economic and environmental factors, including all forms of stigma and oppression.

- Interventions should be constructed from a holistic perspective, where consideration is given to physical, emotional, social, occupational, intellectual, spiritual, and ecological aspects of health.

- Interventions should promote self-esteem, body satisfaction, and respect for body size diversity.

- Interventions should accurately convey the limited impact that lifestyle behaviors have on overall health outcomes.

- Lifestyle-oriented elements of interventions that focus on physical activity and eating should be delivered from a compassion-centered approach that encourages self-care rather than as prescriptive injunctions to meet expert guidelines.

- Interventions should focus only on modifiable behaviors where there is evidence that such modification will improve health. Weight is not a behavior and therefore not an appropriate target for behavior modification.

- Lay experience should inform practice, and the political dimensions of health research and policy should be articulated.

These guidelines outline ways in which health practitioners can shift their practice towards a HAES approach and, in so doing, uphold the tenets of their profession in providing inclusive, effective, and ethical care consistent with the evidence base.

Health at Every Size Articles


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