



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT WEIGHT BIAS?

You probably have heard of different forms of social bias: racism, ageism, sexism...but you may not have considered another population that often is a target of discrimination. Weight bias refers to negative attitudes and views about obesity and towards people with obesity. Weight bias can lead to other negative consequences, such as stigma and discrimination. **Weight stigma** refers to stereotypes and misconceptions about people with obesity. **Weight discrimination** refers to the actions of treating people with obesity unfairly leading to inequities.

Those who live with higher weights can suffer direct consequences of weight bias. Some of the most common consequences are: anxiety and depression, low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, disordered eating, poor social interactions, increased stress levels, hostile and unsafe environments.

There are messages and misconceptions that drive weight stigma. Weight bias is primarily based around a misunderstanding of the complex causes of obesity. Often obesity is attributed to personal responsibility rather than the actual complex factors that cause obesity. Rather than blaming the individual, there needs to be an understanding for the complicated mix of genetics, environment and biological factors that cause obesity.

What can be done to reduce weight bias? Ask yourself if you hold negative opinions about people with excess weight. As with any bullying situation, challenge people who express negative opinions about people with excess weight. Further educate yourself and others on weight bias.

For more information, visit <https://obesitycanada.ca/weight-bias/>.

