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# Breaking WEIGHT BIAS

Promoting Health without harming through digital training tools

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## 6.4. Weight-inclusive approach to Public Health





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## TRAINING CONTENT

### 6.4. Weight-inclusive approach to Public Health

According to the Acheson definition (Public health in England, 1988), public health is “*the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organised efforts of society*”. The current models that guide public health use actions to reduce the risk factors of health, including taxes and legislation, community intervention programs, or translating information about the risks and the benefits of adopting a specific health behaviour into general-interest promotional messages. However, these actions have their limitations; they focus on the factors that are perceived as dependent on the individual and less on the socio-cultural or economic conditions, which have a more substantial impact on the individual's experiences, choices, or even opportunities (Mansfield & Rich, 2013; Syme, 2007).

Populations with poor health outcomes tend to be under the most socioeconomic constraints and have minor personal control over their lives. Public health programs could support the population more equally by applying the following measures:

1. a weight-inclusive approach (Tylka et al., 2014),
2. messages that focus on encouraging healthy eating behaviours and the benefits that come with it, not the risks of obesity or gaining weight (Tylka et al., 2014),
3. programs that discourage weight-based stigma (Tylka et al., 2014),
4. policies to prevent and reduce the harm associated with the weight-normative approach such as, adopting a language that does not mention weight in messages of general interest, implementing education programs for health professionals against weight bias, as well as modifying guidelines to include a third-factor contribution to obesity - socioeconomic status, physical activity or dietary factors (O'Reilly & Sixsmith, 2012).

Public health is responsible for improving the management of obesity and its prevention. Measures that can be taken to achieve this include the implementation of laws and regulations to reduce the environmental factors associated with obesity. Vital initiatives are needed to change behaviours and increase the population's wellbeing, regardless of weight status.



## EXTERNAL RESOURCES

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