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Using SMART Goals to Promote a Healthy Body Weight

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When patients express a desire to lose weight or improve overall health, clinicians can guide patients in aligning their goals with each of the **SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Based) goal criteria. Weight loss can be achieved and maintained by making lifestyle changes that benefit both weight and overall health.

- Ask the patient about their reasons for wanting to lose weight and express empathy by reflecting on their responses. Be aware that the patient may be sensitive to judgment or negativity, as many have experienced weight-based stigma in health care settings.¹
- Although it is common for patients to hope to achieve significant weight loss, advise that even a modest loss of 5 to 10% is likely to produce health benefits, including improvements in blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose.²⁻⁴
- Explain SMART goal setting and its value. Invite the patient to choose one lifestyle behavior to implement. Evidence-based recommendations include:⁵⁻⁸
 - Eat a protein-rich breakfast as the biggest daily meal.
 - Drink only water, black coffee, or plain tea.
 - Stop all food intake at 7 p.m.
 - Exercise for 30 minutes daily.
- Inquire about anticipated obstacles to implementation. Using motivational interviewing techniques, elicit the patient’s ideas about overcoming obstacles and assist with contingency planning.
- Plan for follow-up in four weeks to discuss SMART goal progress.
- Optional: Assist the patient in setting weekly and monthly weight loss goals. Weight loss should not exceed 2 pounds per week. Inquire about support for weight loss efforts. If resources are available, offer support from a community health worker or a member of the practice staff.

Specific: I plan to drink no other beverages besides water and black coffee on at least four of the next seven days.

Measurable: Each day that I achieve my goal, I will circle the date on my calendar before going to bed.

Achievable: This goal seems realistic and I believe that I can achieve it.

Relevant: Achieving this goal can help me lose weight and improve my health, which are important to me.

Time-Based: I plan to work on this goal for the next seven days.

For more information, access Cardi-OH’s patient handout on **SMART goals** and expanded resources on **motivational interviewing** and **healthy lifestyle changes**.

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