

# Words matter:

## HOW TO GET THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS CONVERSATION STARTED

As healthcare professionals, communicating in a respectful and caring way, and developing a trusted relationship with your client is essential when having conversations about health, wellness and weight. We need to be thoughtful about the words we use because words matter.

### ➔ Don't forget to ASK

Always ask permission before initiating a conversation about lifestyle and weight. Don't know how to get the discussion going? Try some of these conversation starters and take a look at some of the different words you can use.

Try this:

Need some help getting the conversation going?

### Try these conversation starters:

- *Would you be willing to spend a few minutes talking about ways to stay healthy and energized?*
- *Are you interested in knowing more about ways to stay healthy? How can I help?*
- *Can we take a few minutes to discuss your health and weight?*
- *Would it be alright if we discussed your (child's) weight?*



### Terminology for weight-related conversations

#### Preferred terminology and statements

- Best weight for you
- Healthy goals
- Healthy growth
- Optimize health
- Growth and development
- Continue doing...
- How do you feel about...
- What does healthy mean to you?
- Eating patterns/habits
- Let height catch up with weight

#### Inappropriate terminology and statements

- Fat
- Lazy
- You're going to have a heart attack
- You're going to get diabetes
- You're going to die
- Just try
- Eat less, move more

Adapted from: *A Guide for Health Professionals: Assisting Parents and Guardians in Communicating with their Children about Body Weight.*

### ➔ What is meant by 'best weight'?

A person's 'best weight' has been described as "whatever weight a person achieves while living the healthiest lifestyle they truly enjoy."

For more information on this definition of best weight, visit <https://obesitycanada.ca/publications/best-weight-book/>



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