Health behaviour and weight management role statement

This role statement was developed by members of the Health Behaviour and Weight Management Interest Group.

It lists the knowledge and skills of an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) working in the health behaviour and weight management area.

Knowledge

- The nutritional, biological, psychological behavioural, social, economic and cultural drivers of an individual's relationship with food, body eating and weight change
- Understanding of weight bias, stigma, body image concerns and trauma and their impact on the individual
- How to navigate conversations about weight concerns and weight loss
- The benefits and detriments of weight loss and benefit of nutritional and lifestyle changes on health outcomes
- Different weight management options including but not limited to behaviour therapy, dietary manipulation, exercise, meal replacements, VLED, pharmacotherapy and bariatric surgery
- Self-regulation techniques and strategies (for instance, stress management) that may support dietary adherence, long-term health behaviour change and weight loss maintenance
- Behaviour change techniques including but not limited to Motivational Interviewing, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

Skills

- Employ a person-centred counselling approach that includes a non-judgemental attitude towards the eating habits and weight of the person
- Identify and address maladaptive eating and health-related behaviours (for example, disordered eating and/or exercise patterns) and refer on as required
- Identify suitable dietary interventions based on individualised needs: preferences, eating styles, comorbidities, social, economic and physical environments
- Support individuals to make manageable dietary changes to reduce energy density and improve nutritional quality
- Use recognised behavioural change techniques to support sustainable dietary modifications including but not limited to cognitive behavioural approaches and motivational interviewing
- Identify barriers to behaviour change and health care, including but not limited to anxiety, depression, stigma, shame and marginalisatione

Activities entry level APDs would conduct

- Conduct assessments which include appropriate anthropometry, medical, social, psychological, dietary, exercise and weight histories
- Determine realistic nutrition, behavioural and weight goals in collaboration with the individual
- Provide individualised meal plans/ideas with a focus on general, mindful and healthy eating, with a specific focus on ways to reduce energy intake, control portions, and optimise the individual's nutrient profile and health
- Use targeted dietary approaches (for instance, Very Low Energy Diets <800 calories)
- Work as part of a multidisciplinary team including but not limited to the referring clinician, an exercise physiologist and a psychologist

Activities APDs working at a higher level would conduct

- Provide dietetic consultations for complex individuals with multiple comorbidities and psychopathology
- Provide nutrition assessment and management of children and adolescents or bariatric surgery candidates
- Implement behaviour change strategies as qualified

For more, download the full role statement. The full statement includes a list of document references.

The role of an Accredited Practising Dietitian

Our role statements describe the skills and knowledge of an APD working in an area of practice.

Working in nutrition and dietetics in Australia

As a dietitian, you'll be a healthcare professional and expert in nutrition and dietetics.