

# Module 3: Addressing Parent Concerns

## Q&A Reference Sheet

### Question

What should I do when a parent comes into the clinic and wants me to help their child lose weight? Should I just say no?

### Answer

First, we suggest seeking to understand more about the parent's concern - that is, what is the root of their concern, and why do they believe weight loss to be necessary? If the child is an adolescent, we additionally suggest seeking their perspective on the parent's concern. It is important to give adolescents a voice in their own health plan.

Next, we suggest leaning on your expertise to assess whether a medical concern is truly present. Use a variety of metrics - not just weight - to determine this, and if a concern is present, it should be communicated to the patient and their parent with an emphasis on controllable, health-promoting behaviors. It is important to remember that the health concern itself is the most important thing... not necessarily the patient's weight or body size.

### Question

What should I do if a parent is concerned that their child may not be eating enough?

### Answer

As with the previous question, we always recommend aiming to understand more about the parent's concern. Why do they believe their child is under-eating? What are their specific health concerns about this? Seeking to understand the root of the concern will help you address the concern as clearly as possible, without defaulting to weight as a sole metric of health.

It may also be helpful to understand what the child *is* eating, and assess whether any nutritional concerns are present. Learning more about the child's diet, as well as any mealtime routines the family has, can be helpful toward determining a medical cause for concern.

We also recommend that you screen ALL children and adolescents for eating disorder behavior - no matter the concern, and no matter the patient's weight. Many kids struggle with an eating disorder that often goes undetected due to the incorrect presumption that those with eating disorders are all thin or smaller-bodied.

**WHAT to SAY**  
**Healthcare**

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# Module 3: Addressing Parent Concerns

## Q&A Reference Sheet

**Question** What should I do if a parent is concerned that their child may be eating too much?

### Answer

As with the previous question, we recommend learning more to fully discern the root of the parent's concern. If the patient is an adolescent, we also recommend talking with them to understand their diet, mealtime routines, and whether they share the same concern. Understanding more about the patient's diet and mealtime routines, along with other health data you may have, can help you better assess whether a related medical concern is truly present.

When it comes to a concern about over-eating, it is important to remember that there may be many reasons why a child or adolescent is eating more than expected. The child may be going through a growth spurt, or may need a higher caloric intake due to lifestyle changes (such as playing a sport or exercising more often). Additionally, sometimes, a parent may notice their child eating more when the child may in fact be restricting food intake at other times. This is part of why it is so important to screen all patients for eating disorders. Overall, we recommend seeking to understand more about the patient's life rather than leaning on weight and eating habits as sole indicators of health.

**Question** What about families with really limited resources? How can I help them find ways to move and eat well that are accessible, safe, and affordable?

### Answer

It is important to recognize that not all patients and families have access to the same resources. The first recommendation we have is to consider what you've learned about the patient's lifestyle and routines when making suggestions for health-promoting behaviors. For example, suggesting that a patient eat more fresh, whole foods may be beneficial for their health, but it is also possible that the family may not have access to such food, or may not find such food to be affordable. As much as possible, we recommend making suggestions that are accessible to your patients. If you aren't sure what is accessible, you can always ask questions to understand where your patient normally shops for food, how they enjoy exercising, and what their lifestyle is like. Further, you may also give patients and their families information for resources that can help them gain access to fresh, whole foods and other resources that can benefit their well-being.

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