

# NEWS&NOTES

The Newsletter for EmblemHealth, GHI and HIP Providers

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## Your Role in Slowing the Obesity Epidemic

There is an epidemic of obesity in America. Studies have shown that approximately 68 percent of American adults 20 years or older are overweight and half of those are clinically obese. New York is no exception: Across the state, 59 percent of adults are overweight and 24 percent of those are obese.



The New York State Comptroller's "[Summary Report on Obesity-Related Initiatives](#)" points to a New York State Department of Health study, which estimates one in four New Yorkers under the age of 18 is obese. According to the same report, obesity in children ages 2 to 5 and 12 to 19 has tripled in the last 30 years; for children ages 6 to 11, the rate has quadrupled.

Obesity as a medical issue remains little recognized by the public. In general, people are wrong about their weight category. About 28 percent of overweight and obese individuals judge their weight to be in a healthy range.

### Slow Down the Epidemic

Patients who are unaware there is a problem may never realize they are at risk for heart disease, diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, certain cancers and other chronic conditions associated with being overweight or obese. The first steps to combating the obesity epidemic are assessment and education.



Studies have found that 78 percent of patients treated by a practitioner who discussed weight loss during a visit will attempt to lose weight, as compared to 10 percent of patients who report never receiving advice from their physician about weight loss. According to the [National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute](#), many of the diseases with adult onset can be prevented through lifestyle changes made in childhood.

Evidence-based guidelines mandate that body mass index (BMI) assessment be part of any preventive care visit. An office visit is your opportunity to educate your patients or their parents and guardians about the effects of a healthy weight and its impact on comorbid conditions. We encourage you to administer, code and document BMI screening as part of your daily care of adults and children.

BMI screening and counseling on healthy diet and exercise can have an enduring impact. With education and thorough assessment, children, families and adults can begin to take control of their health. EmblemHealth offers [programs](#) to address obesity and [resources](#) offering tools and information to treat overweight patients. You may also consult the Clinical Practice Guidelines on [Obesity and Weight Management in Children and Adolescents](#) and [Obesity and Weight Management in Adults](#), on our Web site.