



Facts on Obesity Treatment in Canada

Canadian Clinical Practice Guidelines recommend the use of the following types of treatments for obesity:

- **Behavioural interventions** (a combination of behaviour modification techniques, cognitive behavioural therapy, activity enhancement and dietary counselling) offered by specialists and interdisciplinary teams (some combination of a physician, dietitian, nurse/nurse practitioner, exercise therapist/ kinesiologist, social worker and/or psychological counsellor, or other allied health professional).
- **Anti-obesity medications.** Currently, there are three products licensed for use in Canada.
- **Medically supervised obesity management programs** with meal replacements.
- **Bariatric surgery.** Primarily, three types are performed in Canada – gastric bypass, sleeve gastrectomy and adjustable gastric banding – though availability varies by province and territory.

The Canadian Obesity Network's *Report Card on Access to Obesity Treatment for Adults in Canada 2017* (www.obesitynetwork.ca/reportcard) found that:

- There is a profound lack of interdisciplinary healthcare services for obesity management in Canada.
- Canadians who may benefit from medically-supervised obesity management programs with meal replacements are expected to pay out-of-pocket for the meal replacements, in sharp contrast with coverage available for meal replacements used in diabetes, cystic fibrosis and cancer care.
- Those who rely on public coverage for prescription drug costs do not have access to the two anti-obesity medications available only by prescription in Canada. Pharmacare programs in all the provinces and territories, as well as federal public drug benefit programs, receive a grade of F.
- Less than 20% of the Canadian population with private drug benefit plans have access to these medications.
- Nationally, bariatric surgery is available to only 1 in 183 adults (or 0.54%) every year that may be eligible for it. There are vast differences in access to bariatric surgery from one province to the next.
- Wait times between referral to bariatric surgery and consultation with a surgical team receive a grade of F in all provinces; wait times between consultation and bariatric surgery receive a C grade in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Manitoba and Alberta, and a B grade in Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia.