

The Five As

The 5As model is a motivational interviewing technique originally designed for smoking cessation that has been modified for use in weight loss intervention.¹ In obesity management, the 5As technique has been shown to increase patient motivation and behavioral change.² Using the 5 As is also recommended for reimbursement of lifestyle interventions by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).³

The 5As for obesity management are as follows⁴:

Ask

- Ask for permission to discuss weight
- Explore readiness for change

Assess

- Assess obesity class and stage
- Assess for drivers, complications, and barriers

Advise

- Advise on obesity risks
- Explain benefits of modest weight loss
- Explain need for long-term strategy
- Discuss treatment options

Agree

- Agree on realistic weight-loss expectations
- Focus on behavioral goals (SMART) and health outcomes
- Agree on treatment plan

Assist

- Address drivers and barriers
- Provide education and resources
- Refer to appropriate provider
- Arrange follow-up

References

1. Fiore MC, Jaén CR, Baker TB, et al. *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence: 2008 Update. Clinical Practice Guideline*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Public Health Service; 2008.
2. Jay M, Gillespie C, Schlair S, Sherman S, Katlet A. Physicians' use of the 5As in counseling obese patients: is the quality of counseling associated with patients' motivation and intention to lose weight? *BMC Health Serv Res*. 2010;10:159.
3. Medicare Learning Network. *Intensive Behavioral Therapy (IBT) for Obesity*. Baltimore: Department of Health and Human Services; Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; 2013
4. Vallis M, Piccinini-Vallis H, Sharma AM, Freedhoff Y. Modified 5 As: Minimal intervention for obesity counseling in primary care. *Can Fam Physician*. 2013;59:27-31.

