



# FATPHOBIA : A BARRIER TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR YOUTH

**T**he health of today's youth has been an increasing source of concern in recent years. Data from recent years presents a picture of young people who are less fit, more fragile in terms of mental health, and who develop chronic illnesses at an early age, such as hypertension and type 2 diabetes<sup>1</sup>. Various weight-related messages and interventions are used to address the prevalence of obesity and sedentary lifestyle among young people. However, such messages can have adverse effects on health, particularly in the form of fatphobia<sup>2</sup>.


In fact, the accumulation of stigmatizing and discriminatory discourse young people are exposed to tends to hinder their practice of physical activity and their feeling of social inclusion<sup>4</sup>.

Negative experiences associated with weight stigma in the context of physical activity during childhood and adolescence can have persistent effects into adulthood and lead to people avoiding and abandoning physical activity altogether<sup>4,5</sup>.

## A THREAT TO HEALTH

Fatphobia is characterized by a set of negative attitudes and behaviours that stigmatize and discriminate against fat people<sup>3</sup>. It has repercussions on the people who experience it, harms their quality of life, and can lead to low self-esteem, poor body image, and increased risk of psychological distress and of eating disorders<sup>3</sup>. In addition, fatphobia constitutes a barrier to the adoption of healthy lifestyle habits such as physical activity<sup>3</sup>.





**1 in 2 young people say they are somewhat or very dissatisfied with their weight.**

## Creating healthy, weight-inclusive environments

Through their mission, schools represent environments where learning is focused on developing values, behaviours, and skills that will allow young people to make beneficial choices for their development and health<sup>6</sup>.

- Collectif Vital recommends training professionals who work with young people to better recognize fatphobia and intervene accordingly.
- To provide a healthy and inclusive school environment and avoid the exclusion of certain students during physical and sporting activities at school, Collectif Vital recommends **integrating actions and strategies to prevent fatphobia and promote positive body image** into the *Going the Healthy Route at School* Framework Policy on Healthy Eating and Active Living:
  - **Offer physical and sporting activities adapted to each student's physical ability.**
  - **Value the students' efforts or progress in practising physical activity rather than performance.**
  - **Form teams randomly or have the teachers do it, as opposed to using the team leader or captain method.**
  - **Adopt messages that promote body diversity.**

## Références

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