

# Focus Group Towards a Citizens Charter for the Rights of People Living with obesity in Belgium – Identifying unmet need

Hosted by Pacte Adiposité – Adipositas Pact

The Belgian Foundation for the Rights of People Living with Obesity

20<sup>th</sup> April 2022, 10:00 – 13:00

The Library, 10 Square Ambiorix, B-1000 Brussels

[www.pa-ap.org](http://www.pa-ap.org)

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# About Pacte Adiposité – Adipositas Pact | The Belgian Foundation for the Rights of People Living with Obesity

- **A patient-led, non-profit** Private Foundation
- Representing the **rights of people with obesity in Belgium**
- **Evidence-based** approaches for obesity prevention, treatment, ongoing management along the life course through policy change
- Facilitating knowledge exchange, **patient-led research and advocacy.**

## **Our priorities:**

- Categorisation
- Transformation
- Education

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# Access to Obesity Treatment and long term management in Belgium: Background State of Play

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## WHO 1948 (ICD6 and onwards)

Overweight and obesity are defined as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may impair health.

[Obesity and overweight \(who.int\)](#) (updated 21 June 2021)

## ICD11 Entered into Force as of 1 January 2022

Foundation URI : <http://id.who.int/icd/entity/149403041>

Obesity is **a chronic complex disease** defined by excessive adiposity that can impair health.

It is in most cases a multifactorial disease due to obesogenic environments, psycho-social factors and genetic variants.

In a subgroup of patients, **single major etiological factors can be identified (medications, diseases, immobilization, iatrogenic procedures, monogenic disease/genetic syndrome).**

Body mass index (**BMI**) is **a surrogate marker of adiposity** calculated as weight (kg)/height<sup>2</sup> (m<sup>2</sup>). The BMI categories for defining obesity vary by age and gender in infants, children and adolescents. For adults, obesity is defined by a BMI greater than or equal to 30.00 kg/m<sup>2</sup>. There are three levels of severity in recognition of different management options.

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## European Commission 2021

Pre-obesity (overweight) and obesity are medical conditions marked by an **abnormal and/or excessive accumulation of body fat that presents a risk to health** (WHO)

Obesity is **a chronic relapsing disease**, which in turn acts as a gateway to a range of other non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer

**Source:** European Commission [Obesity prevention | Knowledge for policy \(europa.eu\)](#)

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# Belgium situation overview

- Adults living with pre-obesity (%): **55%** [1]
- Adults living with obesity (%): **21%** [1]
- Is obesity recognised as a disease? **Yes**
- Cost of obesity [% of total healthcare costs]: The costs resulting from pre-obesity (overweight) and obesity vary between **0.7%** and **8%** of annual healthcare expenditure. [1]

[1] For A Healthy Belgium, Determinants of Health - Weight status. HealthyBelgium, Last Updated: 18 March 2021  
[[https://urldefense.com/v3/\\_\\_https://www.healthybelgium.be/en/health-status/determinants-of-health/weightstatus\\_\\_;!!Gajz09w!SYZTKOQO208ws7ot41\\_WKQvbeV8LOnEE3ZGnfeyEF09ylvXIs5yelcwx1xglPkkdU0H\\_zu6e\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://www.healthybelgium.be/en/health-status/determinants-of-health/weightstatus__;!!Gajz09w!SYZTKOQO208ws7ot41_WKQvbeV8LOnEE3ZGnfeyEF09ylvXIs5yelcwx1xglPkkdU0H_zu6e$)]

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# Health System

- The Belgian health system (NIHDI) is based on compulsory health insurance for all Belgian residents. [2]
- People living with obesity are free to choose their healthcare providers and can access most of the specialised and inpatient care without assessment by a general practitioner (GP). [2]
- There is currently no health data framework for obesity.

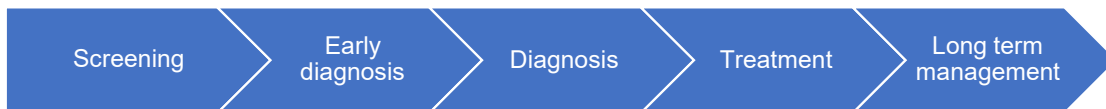
[2] For A Healthy Belgium, Belgian Health System. HealthyBelgium, Last Updated: 23 March 2021. [  
<https://www.healthybelgium.be/en/hit>]

# Management:

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines **chronic disease management** as the “ongoing management of conditions over a period of years or decades”

*SOURCE: [Tackling chronic disease in Europe \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int)*

- Treatment is handled at the federal level, but prevention at the community level.
- There is currently no support for the long-term management of obesity.



# Clinical Guidelines – not embedded in the law

- The Belgian institute for health's guidelines emphasize the need for **primary prevention mainly** through **lifestyle changes** and the need for global and personalised treatments which must be continued in the long-term. [3]

[3] Chambre des Représentants de Belgique. Note de politique générale. [https://www.dekamer.be/doc/flwb/pdf/55/1580/55k1580004.pdf] Last Accessed: February 2022

- Updated **Belgian consensus** on the assessment and management of obesity (2020)

[4] Belgian Association for the Study of Obesity, Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Metabolic and Nonsurgical Support of the Bariatric Surgery Patient-2014 Update. European Association for Study of Obesity, 2014, [https://belgium.easo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/BasoClinicalPracticeGuidelines28012015.pdf]



# Policy

- Obesity has recently been recognized as a health priority for 2022-2024 by the Federal Minister of Health. [5]
- Plans outline the need for effective obesity care for children and adults based on systematic early detection and good follow-up as a priority.[5]
- Currently a patient rights charter exists but is not specifically tailored for people with obesity.

[5] IMANI- RIZIV, Meerjarig begrotingstraject voor de verzekering voor geneeskundige verzorging 2022-2024, RIZIV, 2021  
[[https://www.riziv.fgov.be/SiteCollectionDocuments/meerjarig\\_begrotingstraject\\_verzekering\\_geneeskundige\\_verzorging\\_2022\\_2024.pdf](https://www.riziv.fgov.be/SiteCollectionDocuments/meerjarig_begrotingstraject_verzekering_geneeskundige_verzorging_2022_2024.pdf)]

# Funding

- Bariatric surgery can be reimbursed by health insurance, with a co-pay if certain patient criteria's are met.[2]
- Reimbursement for psychological support is limited to short term psychological support.
- While the surgery is reimbursed, no pre- or post-surgery support is included and there is no support for the long-term management of obesity.

[2] For A Healthy Belgium, Belgian Health System. HealthyBelgium, Last Updated: 23 March 2021. [ <https://www.healthybelgium.be/en/hit>]

# Access

- Several clinics for obesity are available in hospitals
- KU Leuven now has an EASO COMs (Collaborating Centre of Obesity Management)

# Takeaway messages

- **International recognition of obesity as a chronic disease**
  - Not transposed into Belgian policies
- **Lack of a policy and legislative basis**
  - No harmonisation of available treatment and long-term management pathways
  - Low to no treatment coverage by the reimbursement system
- **Lack of full understanding of obesity as a biological chronic disease**
  - Non-optimal or holistic treatment options
  - No harmonisation of available treatment and long-term management pathways
- **Lack of clear understanding and uptake of the rights for all People Living with Obesity to receive sustained treatment and long term management of this chronic disease.**

# Thank you!

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