



# GREECE

## Does Greece recognize and treat obesity as a chronic disease?

- Obesity is recognized as a chronic disease, but many healthcare providers do not treat it as a chronic disease.

## How is obesity care structured in Greece?

- Greece has a publicly funded healthcare system. Within the health system obesity has been identified as a priority. The National Nutrition Committee (which is responsible for developing nutrition recommendations) has recently updated and submitted their recommendations to the government. This report includes a chapter on obesity.
- The Ministry of Health launched a five-year childhood obesity prevention program for schools, and some regional and local communities have created healthy lifestyle strategies. There are also some obesity prevention programs coordinated by academic institutions in collaboration with local communities.
- There is no centralized healthcare system in Greece, meaning that a person can go to any physician anywhere in Greece.
- Obesity care plans are developed by physicians, as there are not that many obesity specialists designated in the country. However, many endocrinologists and diabetologists provide obesity care. Dietitians are independent registered practitioners, and people living with obesity can access dietetic services either on their own or through referral from a physician. Bariatric surgeons are responsible for delivering bariatric surgeries.

## Which evidence-based obesity treatments are covered through the public healthcare system?

- All obesity treatments (i.e. behavioural treatments, medications, nutrition therapy, physical therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy and bariatric surgery) are available in Greece. Many of these treatments, such as dietetic services and medications, are not fully covered through the public health system.

## What are some barriers to effective obesity prevention and treatment?

- Healthcare professionals lack training in obesity. Currently, there is some obesity training included in medical school curricula, such as basic biological mechanisms of obesity. There are efforts under way to improve nutrition content in medical schools. Currently, only two medical schools in Greece have nutrition content in their curricula.
- A lack of healthcare funding is a major barrier to accessing obesity care.

## Are there any formal patient education and advocacy strategies?

- There is a patient support group starting in Athens, but to date there are no formal or legally incorporated patient advocacy organizations in Greece.