

Video Transcription of *Ask Golda! Dealing With Body Shaming at the Doctor's Office* by Golda Poretsky¹

Hello, and welcome to Ask Golda! I'm Golda Poretsky from Body Love Wellness, and I'm here to answer your questions about health at every size, body image, intuitive eating, whatever you need. I'm a health coach who specializes in working with plus-size women on food and body image issues.

So, this week's question is from Christine, and she wants to know how to respond to a body-shaming health professional. And this is a huge issue in the fat positive community, body positive community. There's a lot of research on the way that health professionals think about especially fat people, that they assume a lot of negative things about fat people. And so, it's really challenging as a fat person going to a health professional and knowing that a lot of negative things will be assumed about you and your, quote-unquote, "self-control," and how much you exercise and what you eat and all these sorts of things.

So, how do you deal with that going into a doctor's office? First, I want to recommend finding a fat positive health professional before you go in. This can be challenging. There is a website called Fat Friendly Health Professionals. Just Google it and you'll find it. And, hopefully, there is a fat positive health professional in your area who can help you with what you need and hopefully takes your insurance and hopefully you can afford it, all that good stuff. But I would always start with a fat-friendly health professional. Another great way to find one is to just ask fat positive people that you know in your area. Again, you might not know anybody like that in your area. Hopefully, maybe you know a couple people. Ask them if they know of a specialist who they liked, because I often find that that's the best way to find somebody.

But let's say you haven't done all that. You're just going to the doctor's office. You need some help. Maybe you have an issue with your knee or you have a really bad cold or whatever it is, and you're concerned. And you go to the doctor and they start saying negative things about your body. They might say to you, 'Well, obviously you eat poorly' or 'You never exercise' or 'You have no self control.' Whatever they might say to you.

So, how do you handle that situation?

First, I think it's important to say something about it, to actually say in the moment, 'Hey, wait a second. You're assuming a lot of stuff about me that may or may not be true. I need you to

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stop that and talk to me about the issue I came here to deal with.' I realize that is really, really hard to do, but it is important to assert yourself in that situation as best you can.

Secondly, I like to ask the question, very basic question, if I were thin, what would you recommend? It's a really simple question. If I were thin, what would you recommend? It sort of reminds the health professional that you're dealing with that, yes, thin people often have this problem, too. There are very few things in the world that only fat people get, and that includes type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cardiac issues, etc. So, it's really important to remind your health professional that you're a person and how would they treat a thin person in this situation. It would likely be quite different.

Thirdly, I think it's important that, after the session, you take care of yourself. And what do I mean by that? I mean take care of yourself emotionally. It's important to remind yourself that just because someone in a white coat told you that your body is bad and wrong, it doesn't mean that it's true. Right?

And you don't have to internalize that shaming message. You don't have to take that in at all. This is a great time to turn to any sort of fat community that you might have, either online or in person or a coach, perhaps, to talk through this stuff because you really don't want to internalize it. It's really not true. It's not helpful. It's not healing in any way. Unfortunately, this sort of stigmatization just increases your stress response, which is a tough place for your body to be for healing to occur. So, you want to relax and you want to take care of yourself.

If you can, if you're in a situation where you can get a second opinion, go to somebody else, I would highly recommend that. If you're really being shamed in a medical situation, vote with your feet, essentially. If you can, go to somebody else. This person is never the be-all and end-all.

So, I hope that was helpful. I'm having a lot of fun vlogging with you guys and answering your questions. You have great questions. And again, if you have questions for me, go to [facebook.com/bodylovewellness](https://www.facebook.com/bodylovewellness) and send me a message, or you can comment on a post if I'm asking for questions. And I hope to answer them on Ask Golda! So, thanks as always for listening and have a great body-loving day.