

1 Children, Body Image & Dieting



Healthy body image is when a person is able to accept, like and feel good about their body. It helps to protect young people from eating disorders. All adults can help children to feel good about their bodies and learn how to look after themselves in a positive way.

Ideas to help children build healthy body image

- Share with children that bodies come in many shapes and sizes. People in the same family will often have the same shape and size.
- Talk to children about all the different and great things their body can do.
- Know that children learn ideas about body image and dieting from the adults around them.
- Do not comment on other people's size, shape and weight, including your own.
- Know that weight loss fad diets do not work.
- Don't share photos or images of people that have been photo shopped. This includes images from magazines, media and TV.
- Spend time listening to any concerns children may have about their body. Use ideas from the 'What can I do if a child says...' section to answer their questions.

What can I do if a child says "I'm fat" or "I hate my body"?

Start with "What makes you say this?"

Let them answer, and then make sure they understand the following:

- People come in all shapes and sizes.
- Different families have different body shapes.
- It is normal for body shapes to be different. There isn't one that is better than the other.
- Talk about all the things their body can do.



FACTS:

- A thin body is not always a healthy body. Being healthy comes from enjoying lots of different foods, having fun when moving your body, and looking after how you think and feel.
- Changing the way your body looks does not mean that you will be happier or healthier.
- Photos in magazines, on TV and in the media are most likely to have been changed to make the person look thinner and younger.
- Looking at these images can make you feel less happy about your own body shape and size.

Dieting

Making big changes to what we eat to change our body shape or size does not have results that last. These changes include:

- cutting out food groups,
- detoxing,
- dieting,
- using meal replacements.

In fact, there is a large amount of research that says that weight loss diets are bad for our health.

How to protect children from dieting

- Understand that diets do not work and they increase the risk of eating disorders.
- Never tell children they need to lose weight, even if you are concerned that they are not at their most healthy weight.
- Adopt healthy habits for everyone in the family, including mindful eating and fun activity.
- If you have concerns about your own or your child's weight and health, seek help from a Dietitian who uses a non-diet approach.

Websites

Health at Every Size Australia:

www.haesaustralia.weebly.com

The Butterfly Foundation (Eating Disorders):

www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au

Dr Rick Kausman (Non-Diet Approach):

www.ifnotdieting.com.au

Ellyn Satter (Division of Responsibility):

www.ellynsatterinstitute.org

Eating Disorders Victoria:

www.eatingdisorders.org.au

FACTS:



- 95% of people who diet and lose weight will put the weight back on within five years.
- The biggest risk factor for developing an eating disorder is weight loss dieting.