

The Student Body: Promoting Health at Any Size

Parent Handout: Media and Peer Pressure



Did you know?

Society, the media, and the fashion industry all influence children to want to be a 'perfect' shape. For females, this is tall, very thin, and shapeless. The average fashion model is 5'8" and weighs 115 pounds. This is 23% less than the average woman weighs. These ideals are not realistic for many adults and are even less so for children. An unhealthy body image is often the result of these unrealistic comparisons.

Men and boys are also faced with living up to an 'ideal,' which includes the desire for a strong, muscular body. This has influenced many boys to engage in the dangerous practice of using steroids and exercising to excess as a means of 'shaping' their bodies.

Contrary to the messages portrayed by the media, there is no 'ideal' body type, but instead a wide range of healthy weights and body shapes. We must learn to concentrate on accepting ourselves as we are, including the sizes and shapes of our own bodies.

Parents:
For more Media information on-line visit -
<http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/thestudentbody>

What is a Healthy Body Image?

Body image is the mental picture a person has of his or her body - what it looks like in the mirror and what he or she thinks it looks like to others. Dissatisfaction with one's body can have a dramatic effect on how a person feels about himself or herself. A person with a healthy body image:

- ✓ Accepts the fact that healthy bodies come in a variety of shapes and sizes
- ✓ Appreciates his or her strengths and weaknesses
- ✓ Relaxes and enjoys the unique characteristics he or she has to offer
- ✓ Is critical of messages that suggest that men need to be lean and muscular and that women need to be thin in order to be happy and successful.

Adapted from: The Vitality Approach: A Guide for Leaders, Health Canada

