

Body Image and Eating Issues

mindcheck.ca

and young people

Body image and eating issues are becoming a problem when unhappiness about our physical appearance leads to unhealthy weight control.

ever wonder why you think happiness is only five pounds away?

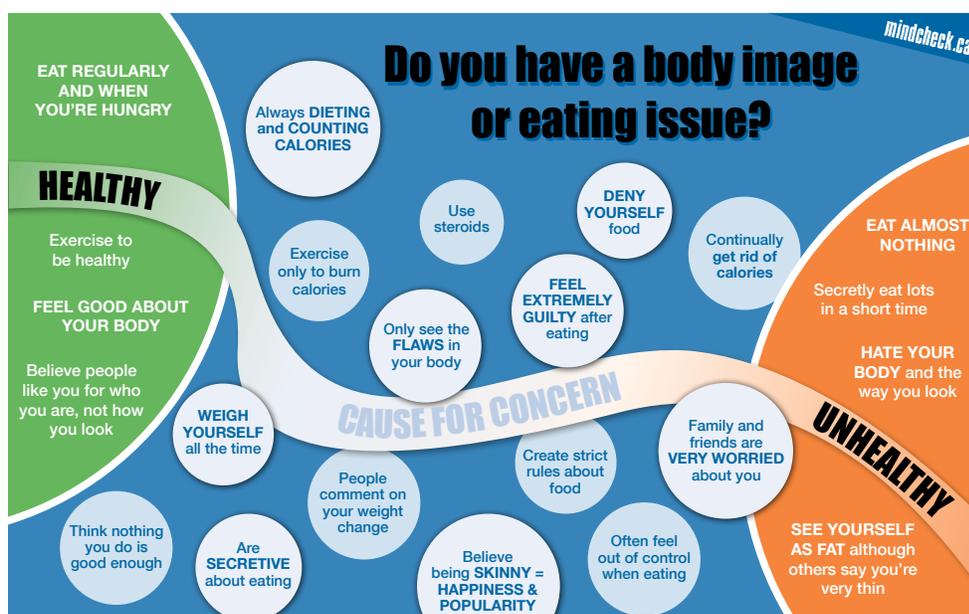
Body image is the mental picture we have of our body – what we see when we look in the mirror and how we feel about what we see. Although our physical appearance is only a small part of who we are, sometimes it can become the only thing that matters in how we feel about ourselves. For some people, unhappiness with their physical appearance can lead them to unhealthy weight control in an attempt to change their body.

Our relationship with food is influenced by a number of factors, such as favourite foods, family traditions, our friends and our daily schedule of activities. Eating habits are also affected by our emotions and life events. Sometimes food is comforting when we're feeling down; at other times, stress or worries can take away our appetite.

Attitudes about body size, weight and food can sometimes lead a person to make changes in their eating and exercising that can seriously harm their health and wellbeing. Food may become a way to cope with painful emotions and to feel in control of one's life. Understanding how body image and eating issues can emerge is the key to be able to recognize them early and to take steps to prevent them from becoming a clinical eating disorder.

what to look for

Check out where your thoughts, feelings and behaviours related to body image and eating are represented on the diagram below. Unhealthy eating or exercise habits can place a person at risk for developing a clinical eating disorder.



eating disorders include:

- **Anorexia:** refers to a fear of gaining weight combined with eating very little or nothing at all, resulting in significant weight loss.
- **Bulimia:** involves a pattern of overeating (consuming more food than most people would eat in a short period of time) and purging or using other means to get rid of food and calories.
- **Binge eating disorder:** is a pattern of overeating (consuming more food than most people would eat in a short period of time). Individuals may eat until they feel nauseated and physically uncomfortable.

Learn more at mindcheck.ca.



mindcheck.ca

mindcheck.ca encourages the early detection and intervention of mental health and substance use issues in British Columbian teens and young adults.

fraserhealth

BC MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE SERVICES
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

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BRITISH COLUMBIA

Ashley's Story

I guess I've always been a friendly, outgoing person. People tell me that I'm smart and talented - but I do think a lot about the mistakes I've made. And even though my grades in school are good, I still think I should be doing better.

There are also a lot of things I don't like about the way I look. I wish I had longer legs and a smaller waist. This past summer, I was really active and lost some weight. People started telling me how good I looked and I just thought that if I could lose enough weight, I would start feeling better about myself.

When school started up again, I started eating less to keep off the weight that I'd lost. When my mom asks what I've eaten during the day, I usually just lie to get her to stop bugging me about having to eat more. She just doesn't understand how hard it is for me to stay thin.

I would look through new diets and try to decide which one to go on next so I can lose more weight. If I find the right diet, maybe one day I can look just like those models in the magazines. My friends say they worry that I spend too much time trying new diets, but I don't see the big deal.

risk factors

It's difficult to predict who may develop a body image or eating issue. However, there are several factors that may increase the potential that a person could experience challenges with their body image or eating habits at some point in their life.

Factors include:

- Family history of dieting or eating disorders.
- Difficulty expressing emotions and feelings.
- Being bullied or teased about your weight.
- Feelings of inadequacy or lack of control in life.
- Being overweight as a child.
- Participating in a sport or activity where there is pressure to maintain a certain weight and size (i.e., modeling, ballet, gymnastics, wrestling).
- History of physical or sexual abuse.
- Feeling the need to always do everything perfectly.
- Always feeling the need to please others.

Both males and females can develop body image and eating issues.

DID YOU KNOW?

- 95% of those who have eating disorders are between ages 12 and 25.
- People struggling with body image and eating issues are often experiencing other mental health issues, including anxiety and depression.
- You can't always tell whether a person is experiencing body image and eating issues by their appearance.

don't wait to get help

Body image and eating issues can place a great burden on a young person and their family and friends. The consequences of not taking action can be serious and potentially life threatening. If you are changing your eating or exercise habits in order to lose weight or to feel better about some part of your life – even if you believe it isn't harmful – take **mindcheck.ca's body image and eating check.**

Check it out... Act now!

Information and resources: **mindcheck.ca**

