

Weight stigmatizing experiences associated with disordered eating behaviors

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In research published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, researchers from the University of Minnesota Medical School found positive parenting and family factors were associated with reduced risk for

disordered eating behaviors but did not lessen the influence of weight-stigmatizing experiences on disordered eating in young people. Weight stigmatizing experiences—like weight teasing and hurtful weight-related comments—were associated with higher prevalence of disordered eating behaviors.

"The reason for our findings may be that structural weight stigma—like the normalization of unrealistic body ideals—is a strong socio-environmental stressor for [young people](#)," said Laura Hooper, Ph.D., RD, a postdoctoral research fellow at the U of M Medical School. "In this context, positive family and parenting factors may help alleviate this stressor, but cannot completely protect young people from the negative effects of overt weight-stigmatizing experiences."

The study, conducted with researchers from the U of M School of Public Health and University of Connecticut, analyzed experiences on disordered eating behaviors in Project EAT 2010-2018—an ethnically, racially, and socioeconomically diverse sample of adolescents recruited from the Twin Cities. They found weight-stigmatizing experiences were very common in adolescents:

- 27% reported peer weight teasing
- 24% reported family weight teasing
- 42% reported hurtful weight-related comments from family members

Further research should aim to understand what specific practices are most helpful for parents seeking to support their child who is experiencing weight stigma.

More information: Laura Hooper et al, Can Family and Parenting Factors Modify the Impact of Weight Stigma on Disordered Eating in Young People? A Population-Based Longitudinal Study, *Journal of*

Adolescent Health (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2023.01.024](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2023.01.024)

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