

Improving body satisfaction can help prevent eating disorders and obesity

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(Medical Xpress) -- In a study that examined the relationship between body dissatisfaction, body mass index (BMI) and binge eating in overweight and obese adolescent girls, Kendrin R. Sonneville, ScD, RD, researcher at Boston Children's Hospital, discovered that the less satisfied a girl is with her body, the more unhealthy weight she is likely to gain and the more likely she is to develop a pattern of binge eating.

The study, published in the *International Journal of Obesity* on May 8, looked at 1,559 overweight and obese girls over the span of 11 years, and observed individual body satisfaction, prevalence of binge eating and increased BMI annually from 1996-2001, and biennially from 2003-2007.

“Sometimes, disordered eating and obesity are thought of as different problems, but our findings show that they are intertwined,” says Sonneville. “Our results show that body satisfaction may be important in the prevention of both eating disorders and obesity.”

These findings confirm that body satisfaction decreases during adolescence: At the study's start in 1996, 57 percent of the girls reported being somewhat satisfied with their bodies. In 2001, that number dropped to 47 percent. The study also found that binge eating is relatively common among overweight and obese [adolescent girls](#). In 1996, 1.7 percent of the girls were binge eating weekly, and during the 11 years of follow up, an additional 9.5 percent of the group developed the behavior.

“Our study shows that overweight girls who like their bodies are less likely to gain unhealthy weight and provides a case for promoting body satisfaction across all body types.”

Provided by Children's Hospital Boston

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