



Help Your Child Develop a Positive Body Image

It is important that parents and caregivers help children build a healthy **body image**, and taking steps early on can help prevent self-esteem issues that may later lead to an eating disorder or other health complications.

Keep the focus on health not weight

- Make sure your child understands that weight gain is a normal part of development, especially during puberty.
- Avoid negative statements about food, weight, body size, and shape.
- Allow your child to make decisions about food, while making sure that plenty of healthy and nutritious meals and snacks are *available*.

Help your child realize there is no such thing as a perfect body – the media image is not real

- Compliment your child on his or her efforts, talents, accomplishments, and personal values.
- Monitor television viewing and discuss the media images your child sees.
- Keep the communication lines with your child open.

Consider your own body image issues- are they affecting your child?

- The way you talk about your own body can influence children's thoughts about their own bodies.
- Avoid judging other family members, strangers, etc.

Encourage physical activities that work for your child

- Don't push physical activities on your child that they feel uncomfortable with or physically cannot manage, rather find physical activities that work well for them that they enjoy.
- Find activities to do together – yoga class, bike ride, kickboxing, swimming, etc.

What is Body Image?

Body image is the feelings or beliefs a person has about his or her appearance. If a child feels negative about the way he or she looks, he or she may develop a negative body image. Having a negative body image can lead to negative self-esteem, which, in some cases, may lead to disordered eating that can put a child's health in danger.

