

BODY IMAGE & EATING DISORDERS



Media and Marketing Promote Impossible Physical Standards

- A life-size Barbie doll would have a sixteen-inch waist.¹
- Action figures, such as G.I. Joe have “bulked up” in recent years.² Boys today rate these new, more muscular figures as healthier than the old ones.³
- A study of 500 models found that almost half were malnourished according to World Health Organization standards.⁴ The average American woman is 5’4” tall and weighs 140 pounds. The average American model is 5’11” tall and weighs 117 pounds.⁵



Photo by Nat Ward

Increased Body Dissatisfaction

- An increasing number of reality TV shows such as ABC’s *Extreme Makeover* glamorize dramatic changes to physical appearance and have been criticized for promoting unhealthy body image.⁶
- In one study, more than half of boys ages 11-17 chose as their physical ideal an image only possible to obtain using steroids.⁷
- Television shows continue to feature impossibly thin actors in lead roles.⁸
- Discontent with how we look starts young. About 42% of first- to third-grade girls want to be thinner,⁹ and 81% of ten-year-olds are afraid of being fat.¹⁰



Photo by Nat Ward

Dangerous Ideals

- Most magazines airbrush photos and use expensive computer technology to correct model’s blemishes and hide their figure flaws.¹¹
- One out of every 150 girls between the ages of 14 and 16 years suffers from anorexia nervosa—bulimia is considered to be more common.¹²
- 55% of teenage girls and 25% of teenage boys reported dieting in the previous year.¹³
- Over one-half of teenage girls and nearly one-third of teenage boys use unhealthy weight control behaviors such as skipping meals, fasting, smoking cigarettes, vomiting, and taking laxatives.¹⁴



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Media and Marketing are Linked to Body Dissatisfaction and Eating Disorders

- Adolescent girls' discontent about body image is directly correlated to how often they read fashion magazines.¹⁵
- Viewing television commercials leads to increased body dissatisfaction for both male and female adolescents.¹⁶
- After television was introduced in Fiji there was a significant increase in eating disorders among adolescent girls.¹⁷
- Research shows that ads featuring thin models increase women's negative feelings about themselves, but also increase the positive image of the brands being advertised. Women report being more likely to buy products from ads with skinny models than ads showing average models.¹⁸



For more information visit www.commercialfreechildhood.org.

Other Resources

- **The National Eating Disorders Association** is dedicated to providing education, resources and support to those affected by eating disorders.
(<http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/>)
- **New Moon: The Magazine for Girls and Their Dreams** - produces media for every girl who wants her voice heard and her dreams taken seriously and for every adult who cares about girls.
(www.newmoon.org)

¹ Norton, K. L., Olds, T. S., Olive, S. & Dank S. (1996). Ken and Barbie at life size. *Sex Roles*, 34(3/4), 287-294.

² Baghurst, T., Hollander, D. B., Nardella, B., & Haff, G. G. (2006). Change in sociocultural ideal male physique: An examination of past and present action figures. *Body Image*, 3(1), 87-91.

³ Baghurst, T., Carlston, D., Wood, J., & Wyatt, F. B. (2007). Preadolescent male perceptions of action figures physiques. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 41, 613-615.

⁴ Owens, P. (2000). Weight and shape ideals: Thin is dangerously in. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 979-990.

⁵ National Eating Disorders (2008). *The media, body image, and eating disorders*. Retrieved June 26, 2008, from the National Eating Disorders Web site: http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage_ID=286&Profile_ID=41138 .

⁶ Derenne, J. L & Beresin, E. V. (2006).

⁷ Cloud, J. Never too buff. *Time*, April 24, 2000.

⁸ Derenne, J. L & Beresin, E. V. (2006).

⁹ National Eating Disorders (2008).

¹⁰ National Eating Disorders (2008).

¹¹ Derenne, J. L. & Beresin, E. V. (2006). Body image, media and eating disorders. *Academic Psychiatry*, 30, 257-261.

¹² National Guidelines Clearing House (2008). *Eating disorders among children and adolescents*. Retrieved July 10, 2008, from National Guidelines Clearing House Web site: http://www.guideline.gov/summary/summary.aspx?doc_id=11035#s23.

¹³ Crow, S., Eisenberg, M. E., Story, M., & Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2006). Psychosocial and behavioral correlates of dieting among overweight and non-overweight adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 38, 569-574.

¹⁴ National Eating Disorders (2008).

¹⁵ Field AE, et al. (1999). Exposure to the mass media and weight concerns among girls. *Pediatrics*. 103:E36.

¹⁶ Hargreaves, D & Tiggemann, M. (2002). The effect of television commercials on mood and body dissatisfaction: The role of appearance-schema activation. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*

¹⁷ Becker, A.E. et al (2002). Eating behaviors and attitudes following prolonged exposure to television among ethnic Fijian adolescent girls. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 180, 509-514.

¹⁸ Neff, J. (2008, July 30). Study: Skinny women better for bottom line: Researchers find thin models make viewers like brands more, but themselves less. *Advertising Age*. Retrieved August 7, 2008, from http://adage.com/article?article_id=130021.