

What have eating disorders got to do with puberty?

We know that puberty is a time when many young people may become affected by serious eating problems. We don't want this to happen to you and that's why we have written this leaflet. We want to tell you how puberty can bring changes to your body shape and talk about why you might feel uncomfortable with your body. We also tell you a little about eating disorders and feeling good about yourself.

If you are a girl...



- You will grow taller more quickly
- Your breasts will start to swell, and may be tender
- Your body shape will become more round and curvy - you will notice it, especially on your hips
- You will begin to grow body hair
- Your periods will also start at around this stage
- You will probably get spots too and will probably have to start using deodorant

Puberty for girls can begin as early as 9 years old, but some girls don't start until they are 17 years old.

If you are a boy...

- You will grow much taller more quickly
- Your penis and testicles will grow larger
- You will develop body hair
- You will start to grow hair on your face and you might need to shave
- You will have your first wet dream
- Your voice will break (becoming deeper)
- Your muscles will develop and your chest and shoulders will get broader
- You might find yourself being clumsier than usual
- You will probably get spots too and have to start using deodorant



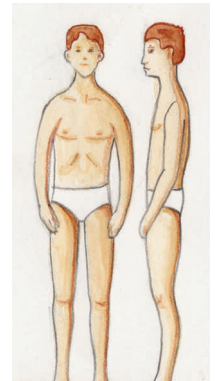
Boys generally go through puberty a little later than girls. Adolescence and puberty doesn't only mean changes in your body - you are growing up as a person too. You are likely to want to be more independent and think about what sort of person you want to be and how you would like others to see you. You are likely to want more control over your life and the things you do than you have had before. Sometimes you may feel good about yourself and other times you may feel awful. You may have quick mood changes, laughing one minute and crying the next. Try not to worry, as you get older you will find these feelings easier to cope with.

Natural body shapes

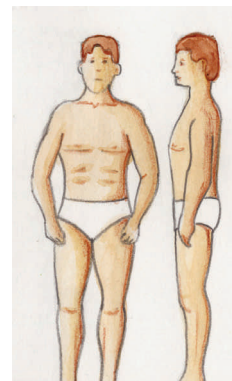
“Eat it all up and you’ll be big and strong”

You may think that by eating in a certain way, you can change the shape of your body. However, a person's natural body shape is mostly based upon genes from parents and grandparents. It is important to realise that you cannot change your basic body shape. Most people are one of the following shapes:

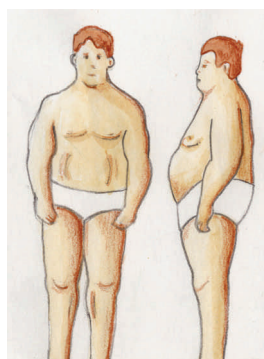
Ectomorph - Tall and slim, Strong bone structure, Long legs and oval faces
Don't gain weight easily, Weight gain is distributed evenly over the body



Mesomorph - pear shaped
Larger hips and legs,
Weight tends to collect on hips,
thighs and bottom, Square or oval faces



Endomorph - apple shaped
More weight on stomach
Long body and shorter legs
Large breasts and round faces
Light bone structure
Gain weight more easily than others



It's also perfectly normal to be a mixture of all the above shapes. Just remember that we are all different and come in all shapes and sizes.



Be proud of who you are.

People will notice how my body is changing!



You may feel embarrassed and sensitive about the changes that are happening to your body at this time and may feel heavy and overweight. This can make you feel unhappy and confused; especially as puberty itself brings lots of emotions to the surface. You could feel very vulnerable and upset. Sadly, there are people around who may use this as a chance to bully and tease you. You may feel anxious or depressed and start to feel bad about yourself and to worry about how you look. But bullying is never acceptable behaviour, so if you do experience problems with people picking on you and making you feel bad, please speak to somebody about it - maybe a parent, carer, school teacher or nurse, counsellor or connexions advisor. Remember you should never feel bullied or pressurised into losing weight.



But what if I still think I need to lose weight?

If you are still really concerned or feel unhappy about your weight then you would be best talking to an adult you trust like a parent or carer or a medical professional like your doctor or maybe the school nurse. Don't try and diet on your own, you could end up cutting out some of the foods and energy that your body most needs.

“Every time I open a magazine, I see lots of girls who are thinner than me!”

Problems with food are usually related to how you feel about yourself. You may see pictures of slim people in magazines who seem to be glamorous, powerful, happy and successful. You might even think that if you are very slim, then you will be happy and successful, but of course in real life the way someone looks has nothing to do with what they are really like inside.



We are constantly bombarded with magazine items about losing weight and adverts for slimming plans or products. Some make claims that are almost impossible to achieve and may even be dangerous. A lot of diet products seem to claim to be able to change your life, they may make you think that weight is the answer to everything - but of course it isn't.

It is important to remember that not everything we see on TV, read on the web, hear on the radio and see in the newspapers and magazines is true. Even photographs can be easily altered digitally. These days it can be quite difficult to work out what is the truth and what isn't.

What is Healthy Eating?

Healthy eating is about making sure your body gets the food it needs in order to work properly. We need the nutrients and energy in food to live. Food gives us energy and fuel for -

- Growth
- Mental activity - including thinking and memory
- Physical activity
- Looking after your body and repairing it after you have been ill or injured
- Caring for your muscles - Including your heart



Healthy eating is not about skipping meals, eating less or cutting out everything you like. If you try to do this your body goes into starvation mode and actually stores what you do eat as fat, rather than using it as energy! If you don't eat enough and become hungry, a cycle of dieting then overeating can occur. *Everyone needs to eat regularly.*

A healthy diet is one with plenty of variety, that includes all of the food groups:

Carbohydrates such as bread, cereal, pasta, rice and potatoes. It is really important to keep carbohydrates in your diet because they provide you with essential nutrients and energy



Protein such as meat, fish, beans, eggs, cheese, lentils and vegetable protein like Tofu and Quorn, these provide most of our energy.

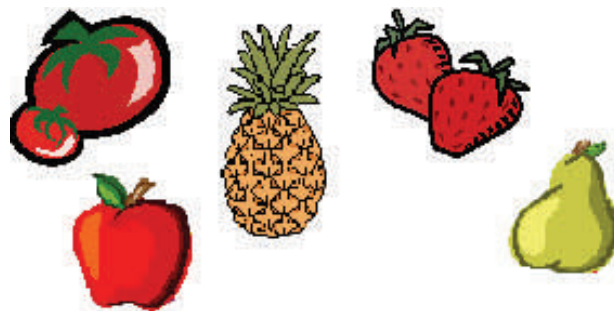


Dairy foods such as butter, cheese and yoghurt.



Fruit and vegetables

five portions a day are recommended.



foods containing fat and sugar - We all need both fat and sugar in our diets. Fat keeps our bodies functioning. Vitamins A, D and K can only dissolve in fat.

Many people sometimes don't eat breakfast because they have got up late; they don't feel like it; or because they think that skipping a meal will help them to lose weight. But breakfast really is the most important meal of the day. If you don't eat breakfast then your body will be very hungry and crave carbohydrates, and you are likely to find it difficult to control your eating for the rest of the day. You will also find it difficult to concentrate on anything other than food. If you miss meals you are more likely to binge. A binge is when someone eats as much as possible, in a short space of time, sometimes not at mealtimes.



“Your body needs nurturing during the teenage years”

“Eat regularly and eat enough”

“Weight control is not easy - it is not simply a case of eating less to lose weight”

“There is no such thing as unhealthy food - only an unhealthy diet”



There are no easy answers to the question of how much you should weigh. It is important to consider your age, height and body shape. We are all unique. It is important that you weigh enough for your body to function properly.



“Many people think that being too thin is healthier than being too fat - but both can be very dangerous to your health”

If you don't get enough nourishment it can lead to many problems. These include stunted growth and brittle bones, and if you are a girl, your periods may stop and you may not be able to have a baby later in life.

What about Exercise?

Some people who are worried about their weight do too much exercise to try to lower their weight. Exercise, in moderation, is good for you, but only if you are receiving the right amount of food and nutrients.



What is an eating disorder?



There are three main types of eating disorder: Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa and Binge Eating Disorder. People with anorexia limit the amount of food they eat by skipping meals and rigidly controlling what they will and will not eat. Their concern about food, weight and calories can start to control them and they can become very ill. People with bulimia will also constantly think about food but they become caught in a cycle of eating large amounts of food and then making themselves sick (or 'purging' as doctors call it), in order to try and lose the calories they have eaten. People with Binge Eating Disorder will eat large amounts of food in a short period of time and tend to put on weight. There are also other eating disorders that are a mixture of the disorders above.

Are eating disorders just about food and weight?

No, they are about how we feel inside too. Eating disorders are a way of coping with feelings that are making you unhappy or depressed.

I haven't got an eating disorder, so what's the problem?

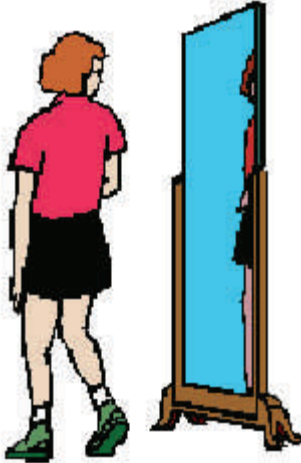


It's not unusual for young people to experiment with food. You may have decided to become a vegetarian, or to try out new and more exotic foods, for example. Maybe you have also tried changing your diet to improve your health? All of this, within reason is OK and part of growing up.

However, some eating patterns can be damaging. Problems with food begin when it is used to cope with those times when you are bored, anxious, angry, lonely, ashamed or sad. Food becomes a problem when it is used to help you to cope with painful situations or feelings or relieving stress. If this is how you deal with food and you are unhappy about it, then you should talk about it with someone you trust. Try not to bottle up your feelings because this is not helpful to you or other people around you, it won't make you feel any better and the problem will not go away.

If you have a school nurse or school counsellor, then it might be a good idea to talk to them about how you are feeling. You could also phone *beat*'s Youthline and we would be happy to talk to you, or you can e-mail them. The number and e-mail address are at the end of this leaflet.

What is Self-esteem?



Self-esteem is the way we feel about ourselves. Self-esteem means valuing your own worth and importance; not just when you get full marks in a test, not just when you are 'thin enough', and not just when you have a whole week doing everything that you are told to do - **but all of the time!** It is about having realistic expectations for ourselves - not aiming for something which we can never get to and then criticising ourselves for it.

You may not be very happy with yourself and feel that being thinner is the answer but it isn't. We have to try and change the way we feel about ourselves from the inside. For example, feeling better about yourself for the whole person you are, rather than just the size you are.

"Self-esteem cannot be permanently raised by dieting or weight loss."

There are many things which you might experience whilst growing up that could make you doubt yourself, your self-worth and your abilities. They may include:

- Abuse
- Losing someone special
- Parents and/or family problems
- Moving house or school
- Bullying
- Problem 'friends'
- Exams



Even without these problems, the change from childhood to adulthood is stressful and can make you feel generally 'not good enough' and perhaps very confused about who you are and what sort of person you want to be. These feelings will get easier as you get older.

Trying to feel better about yourself and raise your self-esteem is not easy and takes a long time. Very often it helps to talk about how you feel with someone you trust: a member of your family; a friend; a person at school or a counsellor.

Counsellors are trained people who can help you to work out why you are feeling upset or bad about yourself. We have information about counselling agencies for young people which are often free of charge and confidential, so if you would like to know if there is one near you, then please contact the *beat* Youthline.

There are some things that you could try *now* to start feeling better about yourself. Try to:

- think about what you're good at and give yourself praise for it
- be proud of yourself, your skills and achievements
- remember you are a worthwhile person
- talk to others you trust about how you feel
- talk about the things you find difficult
- talk about difficult feelings with people you trust
- be good to yourself and treat yourself as special

Hopefully, this leaflet has helped answer some of the questions which, may have worried you. If you have any more questions or need to talk to someone, please contact us.



Take care

***beat* Youthline 0845 634 7650**

fyp@b-eat.co.uk

Open Monday to Friday 4:30pm - 8:30pm and Saturdays 1:00pm- 4:30pm

***beat* Helpline 0845 634 1414**

Open Monday to Friday 10:30am - 8:30pm and Saturdays 1:00pm - 4:30pm

***Beat's* office number 0870 770 3256**

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