



Healthy at Every Size

How many times did you or someone that you know put off doing something because you are ashamed of your body?? How many times did you or a friend deny yourselves the joy of a beach day because you do not have a “bikini body” ? How many first-of-Januaries did you declare that you are going to transform yourself! Do you believe that the key to health is dependent on being as thin as possible, ensuring the number on the scale never goes up? Or worse, you were so fearful of being shamed about your low weight that you risked your health by avoiding doctor’s appointments altogether!

There are plenty of thin people who struggle with diabetes, heart disease, and other health issues typically associated with higher weight. Conversely, there are many overweight individuals who do not have these conditions and seem to enjoy good health.

The point is, we simply cannot assume anything about someone’s health just by looking at their body. In fact, there is little evidence to show that weight as an independent variable has adverse health effects. But because it correlates with many health conditions, fat is generally demonized and weight loss is widely prescribed as a treatment for any number of symptoms and diseases.



Real Beauty vs Media Beauty

In the past it used to be movies, magazines and television that influenced how people thought about body image by enforcing a “thin ideal=beauty” message. Social media is adding more toxic ingredients to the formula. Psychologists found evidence linking social media use to body image concerns, dieting, body surveillance, a drive for thinness and self-objectification. Social Media doesn’t *cause* the problem, but has a strong association with it. Visual platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat deliver the tools that allow people to earn approval for their appearance and compare themselves to others. The most vulnerable users are the ones who spend most of their time posting, commenting on and comparing themselves to photos. One study found that female college students who did this on Facebook were more likely to link their self-worth to their looks. Interestingly, while girls report more body image disturbance and disordered eating than boys, studies have shown both can be equally damaged by social media. And thanks to an array of free applications, “selfie-holics” now have the power to alter their bodies in pictures. From covering up pimples, whitening teeth, slimming up waists, adding curves and much more with the swipe of a finger, curating their own image to become prettier, thinner and hotter.

In this Know the Facts publication we will try to shift the focus away from weight and direct it towards health and wellness.



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Is it possible to be fat, healthy and fit?

Whether you call it “body positivity,” “non-diet,” “weight-neutral/inclusive” it is OK to be fat as long as you are healthy and fit. Yes, you can be overweight and in good shape at the same time. In fact, physiologists now believe that being overweight and fit is far healthier than being skinny and out of shape. That’s because exercise, regardless of your weight reduces your risk of a broad range of ailments, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes. Remember if you’re out of shape, have heart disease, high blood pressure, or diabetes, talk to your doctor before starting any exercise program.

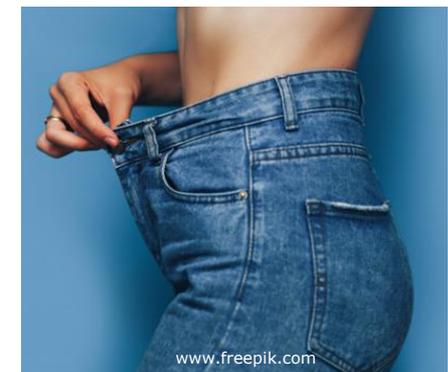
But before you jump to the conclusion that we are promoting overweight, a few pounds here and there are OK; however please keep in mind that obesity can harm more than just metabolism and your looks. Excess weight can damage knees, back, and hip joints, lead to sleep apnea and respiratory problems, and contributes to the development of several cancers. Remember that a fat person who is healthy and pursuing health behaviors is better off than a fat person who is struggling with health concerns and not “actively” trying to improve their health.

Is it possible to be thin, unhealthy and unfit?

Weight issues affect both ends of the weight spectrum. When it comes to thinness, it’s not about the absolute weight of the person; if the lower weight is a result of poor health, such as restriction or malnutrition, then *that* is the concern that needs to be addressed, not the weight.

What if someone is convinced that losing or putting on weight will make them healthy?

First a health professional has to assess them in order to validate their desire to lose or put on weight given the medical context, explore their desire and discuss what they hope to achieve through changing their body. The desire for weight loss or gain is an expression of the desire for positive change to something meaningful to them. It’s never just the kilograms.





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First step

Wanting to lose or put on weight is understandable in a society like ours that is weight-centric. Visit a health professional/wellness coach to see if you really need to lose or put on weight. Through a proper assessment he/she will help you understand what needs to be done. A healthy lifestyle that includes: healthy eating habits, exercising, resting, sleeping and meditation may be the answer to your needs. You may recognize that what is needed is a change in your current lifestyle rather than the weight.

Address the following issues if you have them by talking with a health and wellness professional:

- Disordered Eating
- Preoccupation with body shape
- Self-Judgment
- Isolation

Strengthen the following:

- Self-Compassion
- Self-Kindness
- Mindfulness
- Body Appreciation



Love Your Body Day: October 14

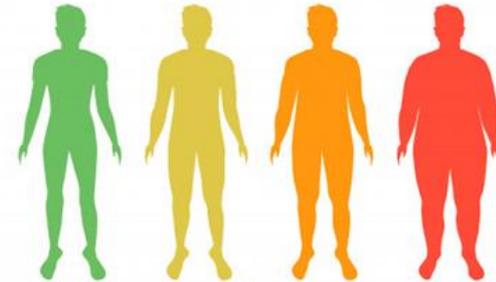
Started by The National Organization for Women in order to take back to the oppressive beauty standards that society holds for women. This movement has gained popularity because less than 5 percent of women feel that they do not have the "ideal" bodies portrayed in advertisements. With time this turned into activist-fueled movement with advertisements, videos, memes, and more. Recently it has overtaken the Internet and social media with its positive messages on embracing and loving your figure. Don't forget the many women who are coming out, loudly and proudly, in defiance of social norms which dictate that they should be ashamed of their bodies, Serena Williams, Lena Dunham, Kate Hudson and Pink are just a few of the amazing women who are literally changing the world just by being themselves.



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Words for the wise:

- The pursuit of health doesn't involve weight loss, gain or achieving a certain body size or shape.
- Don't obsess over a small weight gain/loss, but don't ignore it either. Being mindful about your weight, and checking with your doctor can help you maintain better overall health and wellness
- Be an influencer and take a bold stand in your community regarding body shape
- Address the following issues if present with a health and wellness professional:
 - ✓Disordered Eating
 - ✓Preoccupation with body shape
 - ✓Self-Judgment
 - ✓Isolation
- Empower and strengthen the following traits if you have them:
 - ✓Self-Compassion
 - ✓Self-Kindness
 - ✓Mindfulness
 - ✓Body Appreciation
- Everyone regardless of their body shape is unique and is worthy of respect and appreciation
- Remember we are diverse and wonderfully beautiful the way we are and that "One size does not fit all" 😊



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Sources & further reading: <https://vincitsui.com/blog/2019/03/haes-myths/#.XcUq2NVS-70>;
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