

## Teens: What about weight?

If you are being bullied about your weight, you may be tempted to try to lose weight to make the bullying stop. But it is important to remember that unhealthy eating habits like starving, bingeing, purging or fad dieting are dangerous and can be very harmful to your health. Taking extreme measures to lose weight, often leads to weight regain and a cycle of unhealthy eating – it's just not worth it. Instead, channel your efforts to take action against bullying and find positive ways to take care of your health. Here are some tips:

### **Value health over appearance.**

Good health comes from eating a healthy, balanced diet and being active – not from being thin. By focusing on your health rather than how you look, it can help you to enjoy the process of being healthy – instead of torturing yourself over your weight. Nothing good can come out of being weight-obsessed. You can develop healthy habits and a healthy body image by surrounding yourself with accurate information, healthy role models, and support from family and friends.

### **Eat well and be active.**

Make an effort to feed your body well – foods should taste good and be good for you too. Find fruits and vegetables you enjoy eating and eat them often. If you feel that you might be eating too much junk food try some healthier options. One option is to cut down on sugary drinks like soda, sweetened tea, juice drinks, or sports drinks – try drinking water instead.

Look for activities that you enjoy doing (like walking, yoga, swimming, martial arts, biking, or team sports). Everyone can benefit from physical activity. If it's hard for you to do these things on your own, recruit a friend or family member for support.

Remember that any diet, supplement, or pill that promises quick and easy weight loss is a scam. These products are trying to make money by taking advantage of people who want to lose weight. Be sensible about your health and don't buy into fads.

### **Accept size diversity in yourself and others.**

Look around – no two bodies are alike. Accepting all sizes is part of a bigger movement to celebrate diversity, respect ourselves and others, and be tolerant of individual differences. People can be healthy at a range of different body weights, and remember that just because someone is thin, doesn't mean they are healthy.

 **Be comfortable in your body.**

Just because someone is not overweight, doesn't mean they are comfortable in their own body. It's common to think: "If I was thin, then I would be happy with my body." But, anyone can have a poor body image regardless of their size. The point is it's not about how big or small you are, it's about having a positive attitude towards yourself.

 **Resist media messages.**

Don't underestimate the power of the media to shape our cultural norms and individual hang-ups. We are constantly surrounded with unrealistic images of ultra-perfect men and women in magazines, television, movies, advertising, and fashion. They try to tell us what we should look like, what we should buy, and what we need to make us happy. Don't let yourself get caught up. These messages are harmful and false. Life is about who you are and what you do, not what you look like and what you have.

 **Find realistic role models**

... Not fake air-brushed celebrities! Put down that tabloid and forget how or why the latest teen star lost weight – read about someone you can really look up to. Look for examples of people who aren't thin, but who are successful, happy, and challenging common weight stereotypes.

Check out our other handouts for Teens: [\*Are you being bullied because of your weight?\*](#) and [\*Web Resources for Teenagers.\*](#)