



NutritionMatters

Nutrition Services | Health Services Department

Are You Body Wise?

Is your body shape "right"? Lots of body shapes are "right". No one shape is better than another. Your body shape is a unique characteristic that helps you be you.

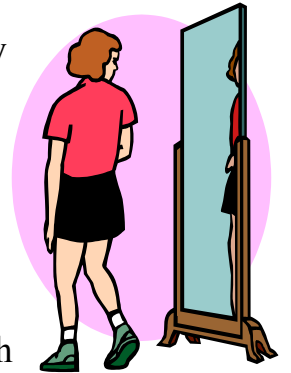
Bodies come in many shapes and sizes. As you grow and develop, your body will begin to take on a shape that has been mainly determined by your family genes. Remember that weight gain is normal during adolescent growth spurts and this weight gain will cause changes to your body shape.



Your height and weight are not the only things that make up your body shape. Other factors that affect your body shape include the amount of muscle and body fat that you have. The amount of fat and muscle differs between males and females, and from person to person. No two people are alike. You need to accept your own body shape. Every shape can be healthy if you make physical activity and healthy eating part of your daily routine.

Change your body image not your body shape!

The way you see your body is called body image. It is the mental picture that you have of your appearance and your feelings about that picture. Some people are comfortable and happy with this picture. Others are unhappy and may try to change their appearance based on their mental picture. At times, your body image may have nothing to do with what your body actually looks like. It is possible for others to think you are attractive, while you feel "ugly and unattractive". In extreme cases, poor body image can lead to eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia, or excessive exercise routines. You can struggle with these disorders your whole life and in some cases they can be life threatening. Therefore it is very important that you talk to an adult, such as a parent or your family doctor, if you think that you might have an eating disorder.



A poor body image can go hand in hand with low self-esteem.

Self-esteem is the confidence or satisfaction that you feel about yourself. It comes from inside you. Things that may help you feel good about yourself include intellect, a sense of humour, physical abilities and artistic talents. These factors are more important than your body shape because they help you feel more positive about yourself. This could improve your mental picture of your appearance and your feeling about that picture.

Create variety!

We are all different. Accept a wider variety of sizes and shapes for yourself and those around you. Look at body weight and shape from a positive point of view.



**Learn to like and respect your body the way it is meant to be.
Make the most of what you have. Be confident about yourself.
When you feel good on the inside, you'll look great on the outside!**

Strive for a healthy lifestyle!

- ✓ Get hooked on healthy eating! Choose more whole grain breads, cereals, pasta and rice. Enjoy vegetables and fruit, lower fat milk products, and leaner meat and alternatives every day. Allow treats once in a while - not at every meal. Following Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating is a simple way to eat healthy. You can get a copy from Health Connection.
- ✓ Be physically active. You are more likely to feel good about your body and have better self-esteem if you are physically active. Choose to be active every day. Pick activities that you find fun to do.
- ✓ Avoid strict weight loss programs or crash diets. If you feel/think you need to lose weight, talk to your family doctor and get a referral to a registered dietitian.

Adapted from a resource produced by the City of Hamilton, Social & Public Health Services Department, Healthy Lifestyles & Disease Prevention Branch. Distributed by Nutrition Services, York Region Health Services, November 2001. May be reproduced provided source is acknowledged. For more information contact a Public Health Dietitian or a Public Health Nurse at Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.