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## Big Girls Don't Cry

### **Study finds overweight teens who are satisfied with their bodies are less depressed, less prone to unhealthy behaviors**

A study to be published in the June 2012 issue of *Journal of Adolescent Health* looking at the relationships between body satisfaction and healthy psychological functioning in overweight adolescents has found that young women who are happy with the size and shape of their bodies report higher levels of self-esteem. They may also be protected against the negative behavioral and psychological factors sometimes associated with being overweight.

A group of 103 overweight adolescents were surveyed between 2004 and 2006, assessing body satisfaction, weight-control behavior, importance placed on thinness, self-esteem and symptoms of anxiety and depression, among other factors.

“We found that girls with high body satisfaction had a lower likelihood of unhealthy weight-control behaviors like fasting, skipping meals or vomiting,” said Kerri Boutelle, PhD, associate professor of psychiatry and pediatrics at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine. Boutelle added that the positive relationship shown in this study between body a girl’s happiness with her body and her behavioral and psychological well-being suggests that improving body satisfaction could be a key component of interventions for overweight youth.

“A focus on enhancing self-image while providing motivation and skills to engage in effect weight-control behaviors may help protect young girls from feelings of depression, anxiety or anger sometimes association with being overweight,” said Boutelle.

Additional contributors included first author Taya R. Cromley, PhD, of UCLA; Stephanie Knatz and Roxanne Rockwell, UC San Diego; and Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, PhD, MPH, RD and Mary Story, PhD, RD, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

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