

Body Image

information sheet

Body image is how you think and feel about your appearance, and how you feel in your own skin. A person can have a healthy or unhealthy body image, regardless of how they look.

Unhealthy Body Image	Healthy Body Image
Bases self-esteem heavily on appearance.	Bases self-esteem on a combination of appearance and other qualities.
Tends to focus on disliked characteristics.	Views their body as a whole, rather than focusing on imperfections.
Compares self to examples that are unrealistic due to physical differences, photo editing, staged lighting, etc.	Creates ideals based upon realistic examples, taking personal characteristics and appearance into consideration.

Influences on Body Image		
Culture The broadest influence on body image is culture, including media and social media. Culture sets expectations for appearance, even though these expectations are often unrealistic.	Friends, Family, and Peers After culture, smaller social groups influence body image. Little comments and actions, whether positive or negative, can send powerful messages, even if they are unintentional.	Personality Finally, individual characteristics influence body image. For example, high self-esteem contributes to healthy body image, whereas perfectionist tendencies contribute to unhealthy body image.

Body Image FAQ

How can I improve my body image?

Quick, superficial fixes (e.g. crash dieting, drug use) are often ineffective. Developing healthy habits, improving self-esteem, and participating in therapy are solutions that may create lasting change.

Will cosmetic surgery improve my body image?

Not necessarily. Cosmetic surgery will change your physical appearance, but your feelings about yourself and your body may or may not change.

How does social media affect body image?

Images on social media are often heavily edited, and set unrealistic standards of health and beauty. Social media may influence what physical attributes you value, and warp your idea of what is normal.