

Help your child be GRATEFUL for their body

Building a positive body image in children is very important.

Body image can range from **satisfaction** (i.e., positive body image or feeling confident, or accepting your body) to **dissatisfaction** (i.e., negative body image or lacking confidence, being ashamed or distressed about it).

Positive body image is related to good:

- mental health (i.e., good self-esteem, self-acceptance)
- physical health (i.e., being more likely to engage in health promoting behaviours, such as healthy eating and enjoying movement)
- social wellbeing (i.e., enjoying peers and time at school).

Negative body image is related to experiencing:

- social problems
- depression
- poor self-esteem
- less physical activity
- disordered eating
- weight problems
- eating disorders.

Childhood is a critical time for developing body image. With your help, your child can see that weight and appearance do not determine their value or worth. Promoting early body gratitude, confidence, and acceptance can set up a positive lifelong relationship with their body and avoid some of the problems we've listed above.

What is body image?

It is how a person thinks and feels about their physical self, including body size, shape, weight, height, skin, or any aspect of appearance.

Many factors influence
body image.

Everyone deserves to feel
accepting of and positive
towards their body.

Tips for supporting positive body image

Try

- ✓ Focusing on what bodies can do rather than how they look. All bodies are good bodies.
- ✓ Speaking kindly about yours and other people's bodies.
- ✓ Teaching your child to be kind to themselves and their body through self-compassion and self-care.
- ✓ Making compliments about non-appearance-related things like energy, passions, interests, creativity, and effort.
- ✓ Remembering that it is normal and natural for bodies to change over the course of our lifetime.
- ✓ Embracing puberty when it happens in your child. Assure your child that changes to body shape and weight are natural and happen in different ways and at different times. If you embrace the changes, it can help your child to do the same.
- ✓ Moving your body for health and wellbeing – instead of for weight loss.
- ✓ Finding ways to be grateful for your body, what it's done and can do.
- ✓ Getting support for any of your child's body image or eating issues.

Avoid

- ✗ Comparing your body or your child's body to others (real life and in media) – body comparisons drive body dissatisfaction.
- ✗ Being critical of others' weight, body shape and appearance (this includes clothing /hairstyle etc.)
- ✗ Engaging in restrictive dieting or extreme exercise practices.
- ✗ Saying one body type, size, or shape is better than another.
- ✗ Highlighting the importance of appearance by frequently making comments and compliments about appearance.
- ✗ Judging someone's worth by the way they look.

How to be a body positive role model?

- Check your own beliefs and attitudes about body weight, size, appearance, and health. Are they impacting you negatively?
- Ask who and what experiences have influenced your relationship with eating, exercise, and your body?
- Challenge any personal weight and appearance biases (our [INCLUSIVE tip sheet](#) has more).
- Avoid speaking negatively or shamefully about your own body, appearance, or the foods that you eat.
- Try being kind to yourself and your body by practicing self-compassion and self-care in ways that work for you.
- Celebrate the amazing things your body can do.
- Accept all body sizes and shapes.
- Get support for your own body image or eating issues. It's never too late to seek support.