

# Nutrition Facts

## Healthy Body Image

Body image is the mental picture a person has of his or her body. It includes their attitudes and feelings about their body and how they think others see them. A healthy body image means feeling good about yourself and taking care of your body.<sup>1</sup>

### A person with a healthy body image:<sup>1</sup>

- ✓ accepts that healthy bodies come in a variety of shapes and sizes.
- ✓ appreciates their strengths and weaknesses.
- ✓ is able to focus on things other than how they look.
- ✓ doesn't believe messages that suggest that people need to be a certain size and shape in order to be happy and successful.



## Media

The media can influence what we view as the “perfect” body. Canadians tend to have a limited view of what a healthy body looks like.<sup>2</sup> Images in magazines, movies, music videos, TV shows and ads show what is supposed to be “ideal” people. Often we think we should look like these people. Comparing yourself to and trying to be like the people in these pictures is hard on your self-image and is unrealistic.<sup>2</sup> Even the people in those pictures don’t look like that in real life!

## Reality Check

- People in the media are enhanced with props, lighting angles, and computer techniques, like photoshopping.
- Shapes and sizes are altered.
- Body features from photos of different people are combined to create the “perfect” image.
- “Body doubles” are also common in films when the actor’s body doesn’t fit the “perfect” image.
- Photo images can be completely computer generated.

## Healthy Growth and Development

During puberty, youth grow quickly and experience many changes.<sup>2</sup> This can cause issues with body image, especially if children and teens are growing and changing differently than their friends.<sup>2</sup> Growth and weight gain are normal during puberty; however, children and teens grow at different rates. Some will grow taller first, while others will gain weight before growing taller. It is important to remember that genetics and the environment are the biggest influencers of body shape and size.

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<sup>1</sup> Wood-Barcalow, N. L., Tylka, T. L., & Augustus-Horvath, C.L. (2010). “But I Like My Body”: Positive body image characteristics and a holistic model for young-adult women. *Body Image*, 7(2), 106-116.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Paediatric Society. (2013 September). *Dieting: Information for Teens*. Retrieved from [http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/dieting\\_information\\_for\\_teens](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/dieting_information_for_teens)

<sup>3</sup> Findlay, S.M. (2004). Dieting in adolescence. *Pediatrics & Child Health*, 9(7), 487-491.

## Strive for a healthy lifestyle!

Eating healthy, well-balanced meals and participating in regular physical activity helps us to feel good. It also helps us to get all the nutrients we need for growth and to be active. With all the different messages in the media, it can be difficult to know what a healthy lifestyle is.

### What is healthy eating ...

- ✓ Using Canada's Food Guide to make healthy food choices
- ✓ Eating 3 meals (including **breakfast**, **lunch**, and **supper**) with 2-3 snacks daily
- ✓ Eating recommended servings from all food groups
- ✓ Responding to body signals of hunger and fullness
- ✓ Eating meals with your family as often as possible
- ✓ Relaxing and enjoying food when eating
- ✓ Enjoying "sometimes" foods like baked desserts and chocolate occasionally!



### What is healthy physical activity ...

- ✓ Being active for at least 60 minutes each day at a moderate-vigorous intensity
- ✓ Moderate activities include skating, walking briskly, bike riding and mowing the lawn
- ✓ Vigorous activities include running, bike riding uphill or rollerblading
- ✓ Building physical activity into your daily routine
- ✓ Walking, biking, rollerblading or skateboarding to school and work as much as possible
- ✓ Being physically active with friends and family



## Weight Loss Diets are NOT Recommended!

Dieting can be harmful and may interfere with healthy growth.<sup>2</sup> It can also lead to problems with learning and mental, emotional and social development.<sup>2</sup>

### Weight Loss Diets:<sup>3</sup>

- ✓ Slow down our metabolism, which means we burn less energy doing the same activities. And, once we stop dieting, our slower metabolism often causes us to gain back the weight that was lost and sometimes more.
- ✓ Don't provide enough energy for normal growth and development of children and teens.
- ✓ Lack important nutrients.
- ✓ Don't change long-term eating patterns.
- ✓ May cause us to lose muscle mass, as well as fat.
- ✓ Create an unhealthy relationship with food, which can lead to deprivation, binge eating, and ultimately weight gain.

**In real life, healthy bodies come in all shapes, sizes, heights and weights.**

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