

Adolescents who think that they are overweight are at increased risk of suicide attempts

May 19 2009

Multiple social factors, including discrimination and harassment, may contribute to an increased risk of suicidal feelings among adolescents who feel that they are overweight, a Georgia State University researcher says.

Monica Swahn, associate professor in the institute of public health, and her students found that adolescents who perceive that they overweight -- even though they are not, according to their [body mass index](#) -- are at increased risk for suicide attempt, according to a recently published study in the [Journal of Adolescent Health](#).

"We were surprised to find that any combination of perception of being overweight, or actually being overweight, increased the risk of suicidality," Swahn said.

Swahn and students in her social determinants of health class analyzed data from the National Youth Risk Behavior Study from the Centers from Disease Control and Prevention. Further studies are needed to look at multiple factors related to suicidal feelings, but social structures including discrimination, harassment, income, housing, food and nutrition, and media messages likely play a role in the increased risk for suicide attempts among youth who feel that they are overweight.

"There is an ideal about what a body should look like, which we're all

inundated with constantly," Swahn said. "And children and youth are very vulnerable to these messages as they transition into [adulthood](#)."

Provided by Georgia State University ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Adolescents who think that they are overweight are at increased risk of suicide attempts (2009, May 19) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-05-adolescents-overweight-suicide.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.