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Frequency of fat talk associated with increased body dissatisfaction, regardless of waistline

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College women who engage in "fat talk" (women speaking negatively about the size and shape of their bodies) face greater dissatisfaction with their bodies and are more likely to have internalized an ultra-thin body ideal than those who engage in fat talk less frequently, according to a review article from *Psychology of Women Quarterly* (published by SAGE).

Study results found that while frequency of fat talk was associated with increased dissatisfaction with women's own bodies, over half of the participants reported that they believe fat talk actually makes them feel better about their bodies. It's concerning that women might think fat talk is a helpful coping mechanism, when it's actually exacerbating body image disturbance. Researchers Rachel H. Salk of the University of Wisconsin and Renee Engeln-Maddox of Northwestern University found that "fat talk" is overwhelmingly common in the college-age women they studied, with more than 90 percent reporting they engaged in "fat talk."

"The most common response to fat talk was denial that the friend was fat," wrote Salk and Engeln-Maddox, "most typically leading to a back-and-forth conversation where each of two healthy weight peers denies the other is fat while claiming to be fat themselves."

An additional interesting finding was that the frequency of "fat talk" was not related to a respondent's BMI. "In other words, there was no

association between a woman's actual body size and how often she complained about her body size with peers," Salk and Engeln-Maddox wrote.

"These results serve as a reminder," wrote Salk and Engeln-Maddox, "that for most women, fat talk is not about being fat, but rather about feeling fat."

More information: The article "If You're Fat, Then I'm Humongous!": Frequency, Content, and Impact of Fat Talk Among College Women" in Psychology of Women Quarterly is available free at: pwq.sagepub.com/content/35/1/18.full#aff-1

Provided by SAGE Publications

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