

Study: More teenage girls using diet pills

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A new study suggests use of diet pills by teenage girls is rapidly increasing, with 20 percent of females using such pills by the time they are 20 years old.

The study by the University of Minnesota's "Project EAT" -- Eating Among Teens -- shows startling results from the 2,500 female teenagers studied over a five-year period. Researchers found high school-aged females' use of diet pills nearly doubled from 7.5 percent to 14.2 percent during the period.

"These numbers are startling, and they tell us we need to do a better job of helping our daughters feel better about themselves and avoid unhealthy weight control behaviors," Professor Dianne Neumark-Sztainer said.

The researchers found 62.7 percent of teenage females use "unhealthy weight control behaviors," including the use of diet pills, laxatives, vomiting or skipping meals. Of the 2,500 teenage males studied, the rates of such usage were half of the females'. "We have found that teenage females who diet and use unhealthy weight control behaviors are at three times the risk of being overweight," said Neumark-Sztainer. "Teens who feel good about their bodies eat better and have less risk of being overweight."

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