

Children who are dissatisfied with their appearance often have problems with their peer group

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Being satisfied with one's appearance is one of the most important prerequisites for a positive self image. However, in today's appearance culture it is the rule rather than the exception that children and young people are dissatisfied with their appearance.

Those [children](#) who are teased or subject to bullying are particularly critical of their [appearance](#) - and they tend to be this way over a long period. This is revealed in a new thesis in psychology from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

In her thesis Carolina Lunde has followed almost 1,000 children between the ages of 10 and 14. The aim has been to investigate the link between [body image](#) and [peer group](#) relationships.

An important conclusion is that both boys and girls become more dissatisfied with their body and their appearance during this age bracket - even though the girls were consistently more dissatisfied with their appearance than the boys.

The early teens can therefore be regarded as a high risk period for acquiring a negative body image. The children who weighed the most at 10 years old were particularly dissatisfied with their appearance. Furthermore, overweight children, primarily girls, were bullied and teased about their appearance considerably more often than the other

children in the study.

Overweight children who are bullied can therefore be said to bear a double burden, which means that they are in the risk zone in terms of developing a negative body image.

As [negative attitudes](#) towards overweight people are formed when children are young, Carolina Lunde feels that it is important to try to counteract these prejudices at an early stage.

The fact that children and [young people](#) have a negative body image can have a number of serious psychological consequences. It increases the risk of developing eating disorders and depression. Exercising too much is also related to a negative body image. Being dissatisfied with one's appearance can also limit children and young people in their everyday lives.

They might focus to such an extent on their dissatisfaction with their appearance that they find it difficult to think of anything else. Avoiding situations that make them feel self-conscious and uncomfortable, getting changed for sports activities at school for example, is also common.

Carolina Lunde says that the title of the thesis "What people tell you gets to you" is a direct quotation from one of the young people who took part in one of the studies. The most dissatisfied young people indicated that their parents and their peer group frequently commented negatively about their appearance.

It might be the case that being bullied and teased about one's appearance during the early teens when the body is changing so much has a particularly negative impact on body image, observes Carolina Lunde.

Source: University of Gothenburg ([news](#) : [web](#))

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