

## Study finds satisfaction in body function, body appearance differs in older men and women

August 2 2011

---

When it comes to satisfaction with body function and body appearance, older men and women have different opinions, although physical activity does improve satisfaction in both sexes, according to new study by a Baylor University researcher.

Researchers found that as men and [women](#) age, there is a shift in [body satisfaction](#) away from appearance and towards body functionality, a finding that was documented more consistently in women. Additionally, when comparing concerns across genders, satisfaction with body functionality was more important for men than women. Another finding showed by increasing body satisfaction in both appearance and function, [depressive symptoms](#) of [older adults](#) were reduced.

The research found programs that are successful at increasing participation in [physical activity](#) among older adults not only decrease the risk of a multitude of [chronic diseases](#), but also increase one's satisfaction with their body function and their satisfaction with body appearance. When researchers studied the men and women as a combined group, greater improvements in satisfaction with body function were associated with being younger, better baseline health ratings, greater reductions in [body mass index](#) (BMI) and more physical activity. Greater improvements in satisfaction with body appearance were associated with obtaining a college degree, more reductions in BMI and depressive symptoms, and increases in physical activity.

The study also showed that white older adults have lower overall body satisfaction and place a stronger relationship between physical activity and body satisfaction than African-American older adults. However, researchers found that improvements with satisfaction with body function and body appearance were more likely among white participants.

"It was interesting that even though body appearance satisfaction seems to be more important for younger populations, especially women, it is still important and relevant among older adults," said study author Dr. Renee Umstatt, assistant professor of health education at Baylor. "In one way this is a little disheartening to think that women and men are still wrestling with being satisfied with the appearance of their bodies, even after a life full of various points of meaning. From another angle, the study provides support to promote increased physical activity for older adults and provide effective programming to increase physical activity rates of older adults. Increases in physical activity improve satisfaction in both body appearance and function."

To conduct the study, researchers surveyed nearly 1,900 participants with an average age of 69 who were in a physical activity program for older adults. They then used simultaneous regression analyses to examine predictors of change in body function satisfaction and body appearance satisfaction.

The study appears online in the journal *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* and is the first study to incorporate a geographically and ethnically diverse, community-based sample of [older men](#) and women engaged in a physical activity intervention to examine the relationships of change in body satisfaction with changes in physical activity, BMI and depression.

Provided by Baylor University

Citation: Study finds satisfaction in body function, body appearance differs in older men and women (2011, August 2) retrieved 4 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-08-satisfaction-body-function-differs-older.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.