

Good body image goes hand in hand with happier relationship

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Survey finds that women who diet are less satisfied with themselves.

(HealthDay)—Women who are happy with their bodies are better able to maintain a happy relationship, a new study finds.

The researchers' survey also found that [women](#) who are satisfied with their current relationship tend to be fine with their [weight](#) and [body image](#).

The link between [relationship satisfaction](#) and one's body image is strong and works both ways, said study author Sabina Vatter, a postgraduate student at Tallinn University in Estonia.

"When a woman was satisfied with her relationship, she was also satisfied with her body weight, which also applies vice versa," Vatter said. "Higher body-weight satisfaction results in higher satisfaction with a relationship."

"This shows that body and body weight can create general satisfaction, which would be forwarded to feelings for a romantic partner," she said.

The results—based on a poll of about 250 women—were scheduled for presentation Friday at a meeting of the British Psychological Society, in York, England.

Women who had previously dieted or were currently on a diet were more likely to be unhappy with their weight and more self-conscious regarding their bodies, the study found.

"Women who have dieted had more extreme standards of appearance," Vatter said. "Even a normal weight would seem unattractive for them. They were further from their ideal appearance due to their excessive weight, and they were more attentive and aware of their [body shape](#)."

"Hence, they noticed more the difference between their present [body weight](#) and their ideal weight," she said.

In her survey, Vatter focused on women between 20 and 45 years old who were currently in a relationship. About 71 percent of the women surveyed were living with their partner, and 29 percent were married.

The women were asked about their relationship satisfaction, their sexual intimacy, their self-image and their self-esteem.

The women most critical of their bodies were less happy in their relationships, Vatter found.

"They had lower self-esteem and they were less satisfied with their [sexual intimacy](#)," Vatter said. "In order to feel good and happy in a relationship, one should have positive feelings toward their body and feel comfortable in their body, because without this a woman might feel

dissatisfaction toward the relationship."

Dr. Gaby Cora, a psychiatrist and inspirational speaker, agreed that self-confidence appears to allow women to feel better about their relationships.

"A woman who is self-confident won't worry about her weight and can establish a good [relationship](#) with anyone," said Cora, who practices in Miami. "If you do feel pretty good about yourself and pretty secure about who you are and what's important to you, it may be easy to make relationships with people who admire you for who you are rather than who you'd like to be."

The overuse of overly thin models throughout media is a likely cause of women's poor self-image, Vatter said.

"In the past few decades, women tend to concentrate too much on their weight and tend to forget that the weight number is just a number," she said. "It doesn't show whether the woman is eating healthily, whether she is doing [regular physical activity](#) or whether she has a healthy lifestyle, which should be of a higher importance than weight or body shape."

Data and conclusions presented at meetings typically are considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed medical journal.

More information: For more information on body image, visit the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#).

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