

# Teasing teens about weight may do lasting harm

May 25 2017

---



(HealthDay)—Teens who are taunted about their weight may be more

likely to become obese adults who struggle with poor body image, a new study finds.

Researchers also found that teens who are bullied about their weight are more likely to become emotional eaters. Teen bullies often target peers' weight, but weight-based teasing can also occur at home.

"Our findings suggest the need for broader anti-bullying initiatives that include both the school and [family](#)/home environments as targets for intervention," lead author Rebecca Puhl said in a University of Connecticut news release.

Puhl is a professor and deputy director of the university's Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity.

The researchers found that teens who face insults about their weight not only may be upset at the time, they may face serious long-term consequences, including obesity as well as unhealthy dieting and eating habits.

The study involved nearly 1,800 adults. They were tracked for 15 years, from their teens into their early 30s. Men and women who were teased about their weight as teens were both about twice as likely to be obese in adulthood.

Women who were teased as teens were more likely to eat in response to stress and engage in other unhealthy weight-control measures as adults, the study found. They were also more likely to have a [poor body image](#) and were more likely to diet.

Men who had been teased about their weight as teens were also less satisfied with their bodies and were more likely to engage in emotional eating.

Over the long term, women were more affected than men by weight-based teasing from family members, the researchers said.

The researchers stressed that children and teens who may be teased need support.

"Health professionals working with youth and families may have unique opportunities to assess youth for their experiences of weight-based teasing, educate parents about the damaging health consequences of teasing, and offer families resources to support children and help them cope with [weight](#)-based teasing using healthy, effective strategies," said study co-author Dianne Neumark-Sztainer.

She is head of the University of Minnesota School of Public Health's Division of Epidemiology and Community Health.

The study was published recently in the journal *Preventive Medicine*.

**More information:** SOURCE: University of Connecticut, news release, May 2017

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides more information on [childhood obesity](#).

Copyright © 2017 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: Teasing teens about weight may do lasting harm (2017, May 25) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-05-teens-weight.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.