

Women deflated by #Fitspiration images

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Researchers have found that the #Fitspiration philosophy is flawed, making many women feel worse about themselves and their bodies rather than inspiring them to exercise.

Despite the positive intentions and popularity of social media images

depicting [women](#) being active in [exercise programs](#), researchers at Flinders University's College of Nursing and Health Sciences have studied whether the #fitspiration Instagram movement is having its desired inspirational effect—and found the opposite to be true.

The study of more than 100 women aged 17-25 years found that viewing #fitspiration images increased negative mood and body dissatisfaction among women, and that exposure to #fitspiration images did not lead to greater exercise behaviour.

"When considering actual exercise behaviour, there appears to be no beneficial effect," says Dr. Ivanka Prichard, who is Co-Deputy Director of the SHAPE Research Centre (Sport, Health, Activity, Performance and Exercise) at Flinders University, and a members of the Caring Futures Institute at Flinders University.

"Despite their positive intentions and popularity, #fitspiration images are yet another way to make women feel worse about themselves and their bodies"

"Close to 90% of young Australians use some form of social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or Snap-Chat. Young women's rapidly growing use of image-based platforms such as Instagram is of concern, given what we know about the impact of idealised imagery on body image."

"One of the most consistent and influential forces on young women's body image is the media's depiction of idealised and often unobtainable body types such as a thin and fit ideal."

The paper - 'The effect of Instagram #fitspiration images on [young women](#)'s mood, body image, and exercise behaviour', by Ivanka Prichard, Eliza Kavanagh, Kate Mulgrew, Megan Lim and Marika

Tiggemann—has been published in the journal *Body Image*.
doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2020.02.002

Results demonstrated that exposure to #fitspiration images led to significantly higher [negative mood](#) and [body dissatisfaction](#) when compared to the same women being exposed to travel inspiration images. Some women were then asked to exercise. Of these, women who had viewed #fitspiration images felt like they "worked harder" but did not actually travel any further on a treadmill than women who had viewed travel images.

The study also investigated if engaging in exercise after viewing #fitspiration images could reduce the negative effects from image exposure—and found improvements in mood and body image following exercise.

For women who were exposed to #fitspiration and did not exercise, their levels of mood and body image perception returned to normal following a period of quiet rest.

"These findings provide further evidence highlighting fitspiration and aspiring to a thin and fit ideal as a potentially harmful online trend.

"We now need more research to examine aspects of fitspiration, such as focusing on body functionality and body diversity, that might promote positive [body image](#)," says Dr. Prichard.

More information: Ivanka Prichard et al, The effect of Instagram #fitspiration images on young women's mood, body image, and exercise behaviour, *Body Image* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.bodyim.2020.02.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2020.02.002)

Provided by Flinders University

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