

How weight teasing affects health behaviors and weight status among diverse young people

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Recent research published in the *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* has shown that young people across

ethnic, racial and socioeconomic groups experience negative health effects from weight stigma, defined as discrimination or teasing regarding their weight.

Lead researcher Laura Hooper, a Ph.D. candidate in the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, used data from Project EAT to survey the behaviors of a diverse group of [young people](#) first at 14 years old and again eight years later.

The study found:

- During adolescence, [weight](#) teasing is associated with longer screen time, shorter sleep duration and higher weight status.
- During young adulthood, weight teasing is associated with shorter sleep duration, lower breakfast frequency, higher fast-food intake, higher sugar-sweetened beverage intake and higher weight status.
- Weight teasing in adolescence predicted higher weight status eight years later.
- Weight teasing was connected to negative health behaviors and weight status across ethnic/racial and adolescent socioeconomic status subgroups.
- BIPOC youth and those from low socioeconomic households were disproportionately affected by both weight teasing and high weight status

"Our research found that weight teasing was a risk factor for high weight status in a large sample of ethnically/racially and socioeconomically diverse adolescents during their transition to young adulthood," said Hooper.

"We also found that BIPOC youth and those from low socioeconomic households were disproportionately affected by both weight teasing and

high weight status. Our findings suggest that health care providers, researchers and youth-serving organizations should view weight stigma as a distinct obstacle to their efforts to promote weight-related health in diverse populations of young people."

The findings from this study add to growing evidence that weight-based mistreatment poses a threat to health and that young people across ethnic/racial and socioeconomic status subgroups are vulnerable to the negative effects of weight teasing.

The results suggest a need for increased attention to existing recommendations to reduce [weight stigma](#) and support young people from diverse ethnic, racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. This includes training for health care providers to better equip them to address the harms of weight teasing and foster more compassionate care to promote [health](#)-supporting behaviors in young people.

More information: Laura Hooper et al, How is weight teasing cross-sectionally and longitudinally associated with health behaviors and weight status among ethnically/racially and socioeconomically diverse young people?, *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* (2022). [DOI: 10.1186/s12966-022-01307-y](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-022-01307-y)

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