

## Body Image

Body image is how we think and feel about ourselves physically, and how we believe others see us. There are many ways we can think about our body and the way we look, a person can have a healthy or an unhealthy body image, regardless of how they look. Developing a healthy body image contributes to self-esteem and well-being.

You might find that there are times when you like your body, or parts of your body, and times when you struggle with how you look. Body image is not just about our weight, it can also be things like:

- comparing how you look with friends or people you follow on social media
- struggling to love and accept your body
- feeling as though your body shape is not represented in the media  
hiding your body because you feel ashamed by it
- struggling to find clothes for your body, particularly if you have a physical disability
- feeling misunderstood about your body when people make assumptions about things like, why you might need a wheelchair  
feeling like you are not attractive enough
- birthmarks, surgery scars or acne affecting how you feel about how you look
- feeling as though your body does not match your gender. For information on this, have a look at our page on gender and mental health

### How can body image affect your mental health?

If you are having these thoughts and feelings about how you look, you might be struggling with your body image. You may find everyday tasks like eating, getting dressed or going out with friends becoming more difficult. This can be at any point in your life or continuously throughout your life, but it is common to have these thoughts when you are going through puberty. During puberty, your body releases hormones which makes you more aware of how you look, and more aware of other people's bodies. These changes happen to everyone, and can sometimes make you feel out of control or anxious.

It can lead to feelings of:

- low self-esteem
- depression
- anxiety
- isolation and loneliness
- eating problems
- obsessing over how you look

The **Body Image** resource sheet helps to clear up this confusion by answering the following questions:

1. What is body image?
2. What are the differences between healthy and unhealthy body image?
3. What are common influences on body image?
4. Other frequently asked questions.

Concerns about body image are widespread, existing across all genders and demographics. Use this worksheet to help normalise these problems, open discussion, and take the first steps toward healthy body image.

**Resources:**

*Body Image: Information Sheet*

**Body Image – A guide for young people**

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/body-image/>

**10 Steps to positive body image**

<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/learn/general-information/ten-steps>

**How does social media affect your body image**

<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/blog/how-does-social-media-affect-your-body-image>