

mirror, mirror

You probably have a picture in your mind of what your body looks like.

That picture is called your body image. You might like what you see, you might not. Many teens, especially girls, worry about how they look and are concerned if they don't look a certain way. Our ideas of how girls "should" look often come from ads, TV, and other media. Those images are everywhere and they are powerful. Big companies spend millions of dollars on those images so that

we'll buy into that "look" and we'll buy their clothes, make up, diet plans, hair products, etc. Be smarter than the ads in which all girls look pretty much the same. Look around at real people and how they have different shapes, sizes, hair color, eyes and other physical differences. Pay attention to all the good qualities in people such as being a good friend, being good at school, sports, or music, not just how they look. Find those good qualities in yourself too.



It's
make-believe

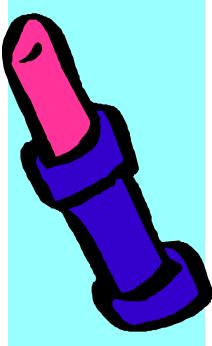
The photos in magazines and ads are make-believe, not images of real women.

There is computer software that can change photos. That software is used to make models' legs look thinner, make their boobs and lips look fuller, and to make their skin look smoother. This is after a professional photographer chose the very best picture from dozens that were taken. Models use special make-up, hair dyes and wigs. For the photo they may have taped their boobs to make them look fuller and pinned their clothes in back so they look just right. So, before you worry about how you don't look like the pictures you're seeing, remember that no one looks like the people in the magazines — not even the models.

Real girls



When puberty happens your body will become more round and soft. Your hips, breasts, tummy, and thighs will be a new fuller shape. Nature programmed it that way. Real girls have curves. It doesn't mean you're fat. It means you're growing up. Rather than spending your time and energy worrying about why you don't look like a stick figure, do fun things with your body – run, jump, dance, compete, swim, touch, hug, kick-box, do yoga. Be kind to your body, it can do a lot for you.



Eating Disorders

Some people skip meals once in awhile or go on crash diets to lose weight (which, by the way, doesn't work for long and is bad for your health). If this pattern becomes a way of life for you, it's time to get help. Constantly obsessing about food, exercise or the way you look can be signs of an eating disorder. Eating disorders are dangerous and can even be life threatening.



Types of Eating Disorders

Anorexia — People with anorexia starve themselves, exercise a lot, and think that they are fat even though they are very thin.

Bulimia — People with bulimia eat a lot of food at one time and then make themselves throw up, exercise too much, or use laxatives to get rid of food they have eaten. People with bulimia can be any weight or size.

Compulsive Overeating — People who are compulsive overeaters overeat a lot of food at one time. Unlike those with bulimia, compulsive overeaters don't try to get rid of the food later.

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