

THE IMPACT OF A PANDEMIC ON OUR BODY IMAGE

How are Covid-19 and Body Image Related?

A survey of 509 adults found a strong association between COVID related anxiety and body image dissatisfaction (1)

Research has demonstrated the pandemic to be a likely contributor to increased eating disorder risk and symptoms (2)

News outlets and social media posts portraying negative feelings about pandemic weight gain have weakened our ability to develop healthy relationships with activity and nutrition

Why is this happening?

There may be several barriers to loving and appreciating our bodies in such a stressful time. For example:

- Messages that pressure us to lose weight because you have more "free time"
- Negative messages about weight gain and the "pandemic 15" leading to rise in weight stigma and feelings of body shame
- Constant access to a mirror and an increase in video conferencing may bring increased attention to appearance and weight related changes
- Increase in social media use leading to more exposure to an "ideal beauty standard"


WHAT CAN WE DO:

Here are some tips that may help combat these negative messages:

- Try using social media in a healthier way. Be aware of accounts that cause negative thoughts or comparisons and focus on accounts that bring you joy or encourage self-kindness.
- When looking in the mirror, try and use compassionate self-talk. What would you say to a friend if they were speaking negatively about their body?
- Shift your mindset. Practice showing appreciation towards your body and the changes it may have undergone to help you cope during this past year!
- Remember that you are not alone in feeling this way. It is okay to seek out support.

AGOAL FOR YOU!

Think of a message or phrase that helps shift your mindset towards being kinder and more compassionate to yourself. It could be about self-love or body appreciation. Write it on a sticky note and post it to your mirror or on the edge of your computer.

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Victoria Garrick is a former Division 1 volleyball athlete who speaks out against the stigma of mental health issues and the pressures of body perfectionism, especially in athletes. She also has a podcast called realpod, where she interviews a diverse group of guests to discuss mental health and body image issues.

1. Swamii, V., Horne, G. Furnham, A. (2021). COVID-1 related stress and anxiety are associated with negative body image in adults from the United Kingdom. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 170(15).

2. Rodgers, R.F., Lombardo, C., et al. (2020). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on eating disorder risk and symptoms. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 53(7), 1166-1170.