

## Guide children away from trends in disordered eating



Parents worry when celebrities like Jennifer Lawrence label the gluten-free diet as ‘the cool new eating disorder’ – and when their children see *thinspiration* images and quotes on Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Facebook and Twitter. People from all walks of life are sharing their latest prescription for achieving ‘the perfect body’ through juicing cleanses, detox diets, waist training, and even the cotton ball diet. These are just some of the influences that are

shaping the attitudes and behaviours of millions of young Canadians that are at risk of developing an eating disorder.

The causes of eating disorders are not fully understood although research suggests that they are influenced by a multitude of factors, including: genetics, psychological, social and cultural factors.

From a very young age, girls in particular, begin to receive messages about beauty and the unrealistically thin ideals reflected by celebrities and models, says the National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC). These cultural influences can shape their attitudes about their own body image and can negatively impact self-confidence.

To encourage positive self-esteem and to make sure your child is healthy on the inside and on the outside, NEDIC offers these tips:

- Help your child develop proper nutrition and exercise habits at a young age, so that it becomes a part of their healthy lifestyle.
- Encourage physical activity for the pleasure and health benefits it brings, not for the purpose of losing weight.
- Focus on health and wellbeing, not appearance, size or shape. For example, is your child energetic, talented and healthy?
- Build self-confidence and self-esteem through a range of activities, both physical and non-physical.
- Don't participate in ‘fat talk’ or comment on your own or others' weight or body shape.
- Ask them about their ideas about beauty, and encourage them to celebrate their own personal features that make them unique.
- Encourage them to engage in activities that make them feel joyful and purposeful (like volunteering in the community)
- Teach them to respect themselves and others by valuing the natural diversity of human bodies, including their own.

- Make sure that your child knows that you love them regardless of their size or weight.

So instead of following the latest fad, or falling for the most recent celebrity headline, foster an environment that can nurture and shape your child's self-esteem for years to come. More information is available online at [nedic.ca](http://nedic.ca) or toll-free at 1-866-NEDIC-20 or 416-340-4156.