



TEENS

ARE YOU BEING
BULLIED BECAUSE OF
YOUR WEIGHT?



UConn
RUDD CENTER
FOR FOOD POLICY & OBESITY

Here is a list of the types of bullying experiences people go through.

Have you ever experienced these?

- Being made fun of
- Being called names
- Getting comments about your weight or appearance
- Receiving harassing phone calls, emails, or text messages
- Being harassed or made fun of through social media
- Receiving verbal threats
- Having rumors spread about you
- Being excluded from school or social activities
- Being ignored
- Being humiliated in public
- Being pushed, tripped, or elbowed
- Being physically assaulted
- Having your property stolen or damaged

If you are experiencing anything like this because of your weight, remember that it's not your fault, you don't deserve it, and there is something you can do about it.

Weight bullying or teasing happens to a lot of people in many different places – in school, at home, through social media, and even between friends. Just because it happens a lot doesn't mean it's right. In fact, weight-related bullying is wrong. Being teased or bullied because of your weight is just as wrong as being made fun of because of your race, gender, or religion.

Why do people bully about weight?


There are a lot of reasons why some people bully. Here are some of the most common reasons why people bully others:

- They think it will make them popular, or seem confident.
- To get attention, or to put on a show for others.
- They may also be a victim of being bullied themselves, and bullying others makes them feel powerful.

Bullies can often be insecure, but they will never let anyone see it. Bullies may not even think about how it makes their victims feel or understand how wrong their behavior is.

People are more likely to make mean comments about weight if they believe that having a high body weight is a person's fault. In reality, we all come in different shapes and sizes, and someone's body weight is influenced by a lot of factors – like genetics, human biology, and our environment. It's not just about "personal choice." Body weight is very complex and being blamed for having a high body weight only creates more weight stigma. Bullying someone or making them feel bad about themselves for their weight or personal appearance never has a positive outcome. In fact, weight bullying can even make physical health worse for people by causing them to adopt unhealthy eating patterns and avoid physical activity.

Regardless of why people bully about weight, remember that it's not your fault and you don't deserve to be treated that way!



What are the consequences of being teased about weight?

No one likes to get teased or bullied about their weight. Being bullied can cause many people to feel down and ashamed, and this can lead to feelings of depression, low self-esteem, and poor body image. It can make people want to avoid being around others, or stop doing their usual activities.

If you are feeling any of these emotions, talk to a family member, teacher, or another adult who can offer support and guidance.



What can you do?

If you are being teased at school:

- Be confident! If you look unsure of yourself, bullies are more likely to pick on you. Hold your head up high and stand tall.
 - Don't fight back. Bullies want to get a reaction out of you. If you stay calm, ignore them, and walk away, it will become boring for them and they will be more likely to leave you alone in the future.
 - Don't go somewhere where a bully can find you alone. You are safer when your friends or other people are around.
 - Talk to an adult you trust about the bullying; they can help you to find a solution or just listen. Tell a teacher, a family member, or even a friend's parent. This is not "tattling". Bullying needs to be taken seriously, and sometimes the best solution is getting help from adults.
 - If the person teasing you or making comments about your weight is a friend or family member, let them know that that when they comment about your weight, it makes you feel bad and doesn't help you or motivate you in a positive way.
 - Help someone else who is being bullied. You're not only doing the right thing, but you might make a good friend in the process!
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If you are being teased at home or with a friend:

- Let your friends and family members know that their words or actions are hurtful to you, and are in no way helping you. Tell them that when they comment about your weight, it makes you feel bad and doesn't motivate you in a positive way.
- Suggest to your friend or family member that you do something healthy together every week, like going for a walk or cooking a healthy meal. You can teach them that just because you have a high body weight, doesn't mean you're unhealthy.