Media and Marketing Promote Impossible Physical Standards

- A life-size Barbie doll would have a sixteen-inch waist.¹

- Action figures, such as G.I. Joe have “bulked up” in recent years.² Boys today rate these new, more muscular figures as healthier than the old ones.³

- A study of 500 models found that almost half were malnourished according to World Health Organization standards.⁴ The average American woman is 5’4” tall and weighs 140 pounds. The average American model is 5’11” tall and weighs 117 pounds.⁵

Increased Body Dissatisfaction

- An increasing number of reality TV shows such as ABC’s Extreme Makeover glamorize dramatic changes to physical appearance and have been criticized for promoting unhealthy body image.⁶

- In one study, more than half of boys ages 11-17 chose as their physical ideal an image only possible to obtain using steroids.⁷

- Television shows continue to feature impossibly thin actors in lead roles.⁸

- Discontent with how we look starts young. About 42% of first- to third-grade girls want to be thinner,⁹ and 81% of ten-year-olds are afraid of being fat.¹⁰

Dangerous Ideals

- Most magazines airbrush photos and use expensive computer technology to correct model’s blemishes and hide their figure flaws.¹¹

- One out of every 150 girls between the ages of 14 and 16 years suffers from anorexia nervosa—bulimia is considered to be more common.¹²

- 55% of teenage girls and 25% of teenage boys reported dieting in the previous year.¹³

- Over one-half of teenage girls and nearly one-third of teenage boys use unhealthy weight control behaviors such as skipping meals, fasting, smoking cigarettes, vomiting, and taking laxatives.¹⁴
Media and Marketing are Linked to Body Dissatisfaction and Eating Disorders

- Adolescent girls’ discontent about body image is directly correlated to how often they read fashion magazines.  
- Viewing television commercials leads to increased body dissatisfaction for both male and female adolescents.
- After television was introduced in Fiji there was a significant increase in eating disorders among adolescent girls.
- Research shows that ads featuring thin models increase women’s negative feelings about themselves, but also increase the positive image of the brands being advertised. Women report being more likely to buy products from ads with skinny models than ads showing average models.

For more information visit www.commercialfreechildhood.org.

Other Resources

- The National Eating Disorders Association is dedicated to providing education, resources and support to those affected by eating disorders. (http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/)
- New Moon: The Magazine for Girls and Their Dreams - produces media for every girl who wants her voice heard and her dreams taken seriously and for every adult who cares about girls. (www.newmoon.org)

---