

## Body Image and Associated Behaviors Among College-Aged Students

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to compare mean body mass index (BMI) in college students who were satisfied with body image versus those who experienced body image dissatisfaction (BID). The secondary purpose was to compare BID to weight management behaviors and physical activity levels reported. **Methods:** During the Spring and Fall of 2011, and Spring of 2012, 612 students completed the Student Health Assessment Project (SHAP). This cross-sectional, self-administered survey included questions related to a variety of healthy and unhealthy behaviors. Subjects' height and body weight were measured to calculate BMI by trained researchers using a standard protocol in a private setting. **Results:** A higher percentage of women (56%) reported BID than men (14%), ( $p=0.000$ ). Men who reported BID had a significantly higher mean BMI than those who were satisfied with their bodies ( $28.7\pm 5.3$  vs.  $25.8\pm 4.8$   $p=.004$ ). The same results were found in women ( $26.6\pm 5.8$  vs.  $23.5\pm 4.9$   $p=0.000$ ). Although 63.6% of students did not achieve 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week, there was no difference between body satisfaction status ( $p=0.566$ ). The relationship between weight management behaviors and BID are reported below.

| Weight Management Behavior | Satisfaction Status (%) |      | $\chi^2$   | p-value (* $p<0.05$ ) |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|------|------------|-----------------------|
|                            | No                      | Yes  |            |                       |
| Diet to lose weight        | 80.4                    | 55.2 | 40.943 (1) | 0.000*                |
| Skipping meals             | 59.6                    | 47.6 | 8.575 (1)  | 0.003*                |
| Exercise to lose weight    | 96.1                    | 92.7 | 3.036 (1)  | 0.081                 |

**Conclusion:** Gender differences in BID exist in college-aged students. Significant associations between BID and weight management behaviors to reduce caloric intake were present in both men and women, however, no associations were found with exercise. Wellness initiatives targeting BID and increasing exercise are warranted.

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