Advice

LOVE YOUR BODY

Not having the perfect figure and ideal weight doesn't mean you're unhealthy

Singer Adele, who graced the cover of *British Vogue* last month, is proud of the way she looks.

She's rapidly becoming a role model for larger women who are content with their body image, despite not conforming to the stereotypical idea of beauty.

The British-born artist, right, does not give her weight a second thought. 'I've seen people where it rules their lives and how it wears them down,' the Grammy-winning artist told *Rolling Stone Magazine*.'I don't want that in my life. I like eating fine foods and drinking wine. I don't make music for eyes, I make music for ears.'

The Eating Difficulties Education Network (EDEN) is a not-for-profit organisation that promotes positive body image.

Manager Deb Schwartz says thin doesn't always mean healthy. The body mass index (BMI) is used to determine our ideal weight for our size but, as Deb explains, it doesn't work for every one.

TOP TIP
Think about all the things you could accomplish with the time you spend worrying about your body.

HOW TO BOOST YOUR BODY IMAGE

Don't obsess about your weight, instead try these body-image boosters:

- Live life out loud – dance, swim, wear shorts, enjoy a picnic, eat a doughnut or two.
- Stop weighing yourself.
- Stop dieting.
- Don't put your life on hold until you reach your 'ideal' weight.
- Look at real people's bodies
- Practice guilt-free eating.
- Appreciate all your body can do – breathing, laughing, dreaming.
- Get physical for fun – throw a frisbee, go for a walk, try yoga.
- Surround yourself with positive, supportive people.

All Blacks such as Jerome Kaino are the picture of good health.

What is BMI?

The body mass index (BMI) is currently the main measure of healthy weight.

You can work out your BMI by dividing your weight in kilos by your height in metres squared. A healthy BMI score is between 18.5 and 26.

If your score is under 18, you are classed as underweight. Over 26 indicates you are overweight. But BMI does not give an accurate picture of health, EDEN manager Deb says.

People with a high BMI fall into the obese category and are therefore viewed as unhealthy, even if they have low blood pressure, high cardiovascular fitness and good immunity.

Conversely, someone in the 'normal' weight category might have high blood pressure, low cardiovascular fitness and relatively poor immunity.

'One of the examples of that misunderstanding we see in New Zealand is that the people we hold up as the epitome of fitness – the All Blacks – are mostly classified as overweight or obese,' Deb explains.

'It's a very narrow definition of health because we don't have enough other information about what is going on in the body.'

Professor Paul Campos, of the University of Colorado, says fat active people are just as healthy as thin active people and far healthier than skinny, sedentary people.

Putting the fun back into food

October is EDEN's Love Your Body month. The organisation is encouraging women to get together and host a cupcake party, have positive conversations about image and make a gold coin donation to EDEN. 'It's about celebrating how we look in all our shapes and sizes and putting the fun back into food,' Deb says. Visit www.eden.org.nz for more details.

WHAT IS HEALTHY?

HAVING A BALANCED DIET BY EATING A RANGE OF NUTRITIONAL FOODS AND DOING REGULAR EXERCISE IS THE BEST WAY TO MAINTAIN HEALTH.

DON'T OBSESS ABOUT KILOJOULES AND SHEDDING KILOS.

DON'T SKIP MEALS BECAUSE YOU ARE MORE LIKELY TO OVEREAT LATER.

MAKE TIME TO COOK AND ENJOY YOUR FOOD.

Love your body

If we don't like the way our bodies look we are more likely to:

- Suffer depression
- Shun physical activity
- Have poor sexual health
- Be bullied
- Indulge in risk-taking behaviour with alcohol