

## **Drugs: considerations on body image during adolescence**

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This study regards to a research on a literary review that analyses social influences concerning physical and social aspects of body image building, highlighting the search on the inadequate and abusive usage of licit and illicit substances to obtain such body image and, thus, present subsidy to professionals who may try to reduce this problems which is growing among adolescents.

Body image is understood as the way through which each individual idealizes their body, according to social influences, either physical or social.. Such idealization is a singular moment which represents each phase in their history, suffering constant alterations, once the search for an ideal body is focused by the media and by the social culture to which one belongs. (Tavares, 2003)

Body image has, for many times, been interpreted as a synonym of body scheme, body conscience or body perception, but body image reflects an own and individual way of setting ourselves into the world and how we mold ourselves facing external world interaction. This way we develop our personal identity basis. (Tavares, 2003)

Changes in body image occur, mainly in adolescence. In that phase the body has constant alterations. In that phase the search for a perfect body is continuous, once both sexes already show mature and physically interested in each other. It is also in that phase that social insertion becomes vital to the adolescent, what turns themselves vulnerable to the interference from media, as well as from the society where they are inserted in.

That physical appeal influence interferes into the opinion the adolescents have about themselves and into how others face them, presenting themselves both in pleasant or unpleasant ways. This is the context that many times leads them to drugs and its bad usage. For not accepting their body image and the natural process of change, some adolescents take substances that promise miraculous and fast alterations to the body image. (Santos & Santos, 2002, Campos, 2003 and Barros, 2005)

Knowing that adolescents are influenced regarding their body image due to physical alterations, media and society charges, we aimed to analyze social influence regarding the body image construction under its physical and social aspects, highlighting the importance of the physical education professional as a mediator of information and guiding about the damage caused by the bad usage of licit and illicit substances used to gain such body image.

According to our reference, images we view in our minds are generated by nervous impulses that come to the brain by specific nervous ways, where the environmental stimuli from the environment are captured by receptors of the nervous system (medulla and brain) and taken into the brain. That way may vary according to the sensitivity of each individual. The information captured are codified into the brain and sent to association areas, which are into the cortex. This way we interpret what we see and in order to that interpretation to happen, we need the experience acquired through the relationship and living into a society or culture. We compare our fantasy to the cultural standards at the time and evaluate ourselves and it may start several alterations, among which, the body image alteration, for it is deeply related to the perception and mental representation. (Duarte in Tavares 2007)

Adolescents are vulnerable to changes provoked by the modern world and also by the impact of the explosions of scientific progress, technologies, communications and new human aspirations caused by fast social changes and such changes may be related to a serious way of alteration of development of body image. (Campos,2002, Tavares, 2003)

That phase is marked by a period of accelerated increases, gaining weight and height, what considerably varies from individual to individual through their genetic base (genotypes) and also from their environment conditions (phenotypes). This period begins before sexual maturation. Boys around 11 years old have a fast growth which stabilizes around 15 years old. Girls start it about two years before and finish it around 13 years old. (Santos &Santos,2002)

Together to sexual maturation where biological changes, such as growth alterations, physical appearance, work of the endocrine glands and voice timber, among others are observed and come from changes in the adolescent's organism is suffering. (Campos, 2002)

The increasing number of adolescents suffering from body image distortion, such as bulimia, anorexia and it is a reflex of the obsession by the body shape that are achieved through diets and plastic surgeries.(Nakamura in Busse, 2004, Barros, 2005)

Among the so many psychosocial phenomena occurring during the puberty, gaining weight is one of the biggest. Not gaining weight or not losing real weight may be related to the reflex to the growing attention to an adolescent who is altered by diets, practice of exercise,, as for genetic factors or for general factors of lifestyle. The increasing of body fat has been given by a sedentary lifestyle and the non healthy food standards of our society. (Wolf, 1992, Gallahue & Ozmun, 2003)

The meaningful increase of number of food disorders may be related to that specific social-cultural context in which the body is exposed and its image is over valued, according to the esthetical standards, specially the ones from TV, fashion and movies. Thus, the daily thoughts started to privilege physical appearance more and more, linked to esthetical ideals and the glamour of TV programs that are linked to perfection, many times pointed as a female demand once men are biologically stronger and more competent and fight for beautiful women, what is contested by a critical view that "beauty is a universal standard monetary system". (Wolf, 1992; Nakamura in Busse, 2004; Busse, 2004; Junior in Busse, 2004)

Adolescent's worry about their body image is evident, mainly in puberty, where there is a more accelerated structural development, although media presses for a cultural standard of beauty that is much farther from the healthy one.and what makes that this group start using different food resources ever earlier, what includes even licit drugs that may have effects that are not expected by the user. (Santos & Santos< 2002, Gallahue & Ozmun 2003)

According to Shilder (1935), the conception and perspective of body image definition were only focused on neurological basis and the individual, through their ego, intentions, fights and wishes, uses sensations and perceptions in the development of body image and that posture body model must be developed, then, a creation and a construction, not a genetic gift and posture alterations are deeply linked to the movement, then there is the importance of a physical education professional. (Ravares, 2003)

Through the paper above, it was possible to identify that many factors contribute to the formation of body image in adolescence, although some methods may lead to serious damage this so turbulent and vulnerable phase in life, that is remarked by psychological and physical changes and reactions.

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