

9. Mirror, mirror, on your wall: The impact of fashion on eating difficulties

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Ella is a young woman who likes hanging around with her friends, dressing up to the occasion and spending quite a lot of time on her phone. As time goes by and without her necessarily making an active choice, she gradually finds herself engaging in restricted eating and quite strict dieting. Why do women like Ella feel that they need to change their eating patterns?

Fashion and beauty advertisements are all around us. You see fashion advertisements on your daily commute to work, on billboards, in shop windows during your leisurely walks, in multiple magazines scattered around coffee tables, on TV around every 20 minutes and, of course, on your social media feed. These advertisements repeatedly present how you should look, and for women the message is quite clear: one needs to be relatively tall, slim, young and Caucasian. Men are also increasingly becoming fashion conscious, although beauty standards for males are more diverse. In general, they experience less pressure to fit stereotypical images and standards of physical appearance. In this chapter, we will look at how fashion impacts on our relationship with food, primarily focusing on how the acceptance of socially constructed beauty standards affects eating behaviour.