



News Release

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Media Contact: Sally Finney, Executive Director
(847)498-4274, ext. 222

Academy for Eating Disorders Presents Guidelines for the Fashion Industry

In the wake of several recent deaths worldwide of fashion models, the Academy for Eating Disorders (AED), an international organization for eating disorder treatment, research, and education professionals, has called for industry and government support of a ban of extremely underweight models both on the runway and in fashion magazines.

"Too many models have died from eating disorders. These guidelines will help the industry take responsibility for the health and wellbeing of models," states Dr. Eric van Furth, AED President and clinical director of the Center for Eating Disorders Ursula in Leidschendam, the Netherlands. "Recent tragic deaths highlight the urgent need for industry regulation," he says.

Eating disorders are triggered by a combination of genetic and environmental factors, including socio-cultural influences such as an extremely thin standard of female beauty upheld by the fashion industry. The AED urges the immediate adoption of guidelines by the fashion industry to protect models of all ages from dangerous health practices.

Dr. Cynthia Bulik, distinguished professor of eating disorders in the department of psychiatry and director of the Eating Disorders Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine, urges the industry to open a dialogue with the AED stating "adherence to the AED Guidelines will save lives."

AED Guidelines for the Fashion Industry

- Adoption of an age threshold requiring that models be at least 16 years of age so as to reduce the pressure that adolescent girls feel to conform to the ultra-thin standard of female beauty.
- For women and men over the age of 18, adoption of a minimum body mass index threshold of 18.5 kg/m^2 , (e.g., a female model who is 5' 9" [1.75 m] must weigh more than 126 pounds [57.3 kg]) which recognizes that weight below this is considered underweight by the World Health Organization.
- For female and male models between the ages of 16 and 18, adoption of a minimum body mass index for age and sex equivalent to the 10th BMI percentile for age and sex (weight below this is considered underweight by the Centers for Disease Control). For example, applying this criterion to a 16 year old female model, the minimum required body mass index would be 17.4 kg/m^2 , for a male model 17.7 kg/m^2 . A 16 year old female model who is 5' 9" [1.75 m] must weigh more than 117 pounds [53.3 kg].

- Adoption of an independent medical certification affirming that students who are aspiring models do not suffer from an eating disorder and/or related medical complications (see below).
- Development of action steps to identify models in need of intervention and appropriate and sensitive procedures for detection and referral.
- Discouragement of all non-healthy weight control behaviors throughout the industry (e.g., self-induced vomiting, use of laxatives, diuretics and diet pills). Increased educational initiatives aimed at student models and professional models, their agents and employers to reduce the multiple health risks of various unhealthy weight control behaviors.
- Provision of educational initiatives aimed at aspiring and working student models, professional models, their agents and employers to raise awareness of the multiple health risks of low weight and restricted nutritional intake. These health risks include irregularity or cessation of menses, bradycardia (low heart rate)/irregular heart beat, electrolyte imbalances, dizziness/fainting spells, sudden cardiac death and long term health complications including osteoporosis, depression, and reproductive complications.
- Increased communication with advertising agencies to encourage the use of age-appropriate, realistic models in ad campaigns and reduction of unrealistic computer enhancement in pre-teen and adolescent advertising campaigns.
- An overall ban of the use of photographic manipulation techniques that artificially slim images of fashion models throughout the entire fashion industry.
- Inclusion of models of varying weights and body types on both the catwalk and in fashion magazines so that these images - and the message that women and men of differing body types can look good in a variety of fashions - become part of our collective view of what constitutes beauty.
- Promotion of awareness in students, models, and the general public about advertising industry tactics, such as computer enhancement, used to falsify the appearance and actual size of models used in advertising.
- Collaboration with politicians, stakeholders, and eating disorder organizations to develop ethical self-regulatory codes for the fashion industry.
- Collaboration with politicians, stakeholders, and eating disorder organizations in widening the availability and affordability of effective eating disorders treatment, which must be made readily available to people in the fashion industry.

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The Academy for Eating Disorders is an international, trans-disciplinary professional organization with over 1,400 members worldwide. The AED promotes excellence in research, treatment and the prevention of eating disorders. It provides education, training and a forum for collaboration and professional dialogue. Visit www.aedweb.org for more information on AED, eating disorders, and the *Worldwide Charter for Action on Eating Disorders*.