

Be your own best advocate.

Universal Impact: EATING DISORDERS & WOMEN OF COLOR

? WHICH ETHNICITIES MOST COMMONLY EXPERIENCE BOTH BODY DISSATISFACTION AND EATING DISORDERS?

- a) Caucasian and Asian American women
- b) Hispanic and biracial women
- c) African American and Native American women
- d) All of the above

If you or someone you know may be suffering from an eating disorder, take an anonymous online screening at MyBodyScreening.org

The truth is, neither of these issues has a gender or race bias as they encompass numerous countries and cultures. Many people generalize eating disorders and body dissatisfaction as problems experienced only by Caucasian women.

Following this belief system may discourage open discussion about eating and weight-related concerns among women of color.

WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?

Talking about it is the first step toward getting the help you or a friend may need.

✓ **SPEAK UP:** If you are a woman of color, your doctor or nurse might not be as likely to ask about eating disorder symptoms. Many eating disorders studies that medical professionals refer to include only Caucasian women as subjects. Don't wait for them to diagnose you; ask about your treatment options.

✓ **OPEN UP:** Shame and stigma can prevent people from sharing struggles about having low body image or an eating disorder. It turns out that there isn't much difference between the rates of binge eating, restrictive dieting and over-exercising among Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic, Asian or Native American college students. Talk to your friends about what you're feeling—chances are they may be experiencing something similar.

✓ **ADVOCATE:** Despite being equally symptomatic, as a minority you're half as likely to receive a recommendation from your primary care clinician to a mental health professional (compared to non-minority individuals). You are your best advocate. Start by seeing your family doctor, mental health counselor or primary care provider if you are struggling with healthy habits. Be informed about your eating disorder and about treatment resources on campus or in the community.

Know the truth and don't suffer in silence.

References:

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