

## Eating Disorders

### Review 9

Newton, M. S., & Ciliska, D. (2006). Internet-based innovations for the prevention of eating disorders: A systematic review. *Eating Disorders, 14*, 365–384. PubMed abstract available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17062448>.

<b>Objectives</b>	Compare the results of studies of Internet-based eating disorder prevention programs.
<b>Studies Included</b>	Five U.S. studies from 1998 to 2004
<b>Participants in the Studies</b>	High school and undergraduate female university students
<b>Settings</b>	Reported settings included high schools and universities.
<b>Outcomes</b>	Body dissatisfaction, negative eating behaviors and attitudes, social support, self- and other-acceptance, completion rates
<b>Limitations of the Studies</b>	Weak-to-moderate methodological quality of the studies; limited generalizability from sampling bias and small sample sizes; two of the five studies observed a time effect on both the intervention and control groups, reinforcing the possibility that effect sizes may have been mediated by covariates such as cointerventions (education efforts) occurring on school campuses or other unaccounted for covariates that may have skewed the studies' results; subjects' previous histories of an eating disorder and/or past treatments related to eating pathology or life events were not assessed and could have been confounding variables

### Results

All the trials evaluated the same Internet-based program StudentBodies, which includes psychoeducational readings and reflection, an Internet-based body image journal, and an asynchronous (i.e., message boards that individuals respond to at their own discretion) Internet discussion group. Although most trials demonstrated strong methodology regarding subject randomization and use of a control group, a meta-analysis of the trial results indicated no statistical significance for pooled study outcome data. Therefore, there was no robust evidence on the impact of Internet-based prevention strategies on eating disordered symptomatology and on factors presumed to contribute to eating disorder development. It is recommended that future studies increase sample sizes and control for possible covariates, such as cointerventions.