

A Question of Size

by Tini Lehmann, 6A

It is the big dream of many teenage girls: Glamour, paparazzi, wealth, luxury, the frenzy of flashing cameras. Almost every girl once dreamt of being a supermodel. Walking down the catwalk for the biggest, most expensive designer labels, wearing the prettiest gowns and being famous seems like the perfect life, doesn't it? Well, if you only take a look at the rather "positive" aspects, then it might seem like a life full of happiness and fun. But with all due respect to our kings and queens in the fashion industry, forcing runway models to starve themselves until they reach the "ideal" body type is ridiculous. Current magazines show that it is still: *a question of size*.

In order to illustrate how bad the situation is, I would like to give a few examples:

There are so many famous high fashion models out there struggling to keep up with the high expectations and pressure put on them, seeing as the fashion industry ranks among the toughest ones in the world. I am sure that you have heard of all these crazy diets for models and celebrities to stay "in shape". Natalie Portman, for example, was on an "almonds and carrots diet" in order to lose 20 pounds for her role as Nina Sayers in the movie *Black Swan*. Another example for a crazy diet within the Hollywood community would be Lady Gaga's "drunk diet", a diet consisting of unlimited whiskey (whenever you want) and a carbless meal every now and then. She also recommends working out while hung over. I am sure I do not have to explain how harmful these diets are to the human body and what risks they entail.

But probably the most dangerous diet of them all is the "cotton ball and orange juice diet", which is very popular with models these days. If you want to participate in this self-destructive way of losing weight, many chat rooms and YouTube videos explain the steps you have to follow. This "diet" involves swallowing up to five cotton balls dipped in orange juice or a smoothie per day in order to feel full without gaining weight. Again, like every crazy diet, the health risks are tremendous. First of all, the cotton balls are made of bleached polyester fibres which contain a lot of chemicals and may destroy your stomach lining as well as your intestines. "Your clothing is also made of polyester, so swallowing a synthetic cotton ball is like dipping your T-shirt in orange juice and eating it," states Brandi Koskie, managing editor of the website Diets in Review. Actress and model Bria Murphy admitted in a 2017 interview with the American news and opinion website *HuffPost*, 'I've heard of people eating the cotton balls with the orange juice... they dip it in the orange juice and then they eat the cotton balls to help them feel full, because the cotton's not doing anything. It's just dissolving. And it makes you think you're full, but you're not.'¹

These days, almost everybody seems to worry about their size. That is without doubt how such crazy, harmful diets gain popularity among young people. In order to show how worrying the current situation is, I would like to introduce you to something called the body mass index. The BMI is an index used to indicate whether a person is over- or underweight. It is obtained by dividing a person's weight in kilograms by the square of their height in metres. Based on the value, a person can be categorised as underweight, normal weight, overweight or obese. The commonly accepted BMI ranges are: underweight: under 18.5, normal weight: 18.5 to 25, overweight: 25 to 30, obese: over 30.

¹ https://www.huffpost.com/entry/bria-murphy-reveals-models-eat-cotton-balls-with-orange-juice_n_3423815?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAGIgiKP71RFHKH1bvJSTEN1p7Di9-b8qdhJW3zDXZ4JajD5wQKG96GhnMQ8u4CXvldboQww5HE_6uQKd8ybrWHI-qCTdg3gpoJV-ZFJgiXTIOE0V6tTsmI6O7M4vgY5MlcyoeL1HP2nS2E2y4hHQYZchQYwblOrP_100W9M1K4Uzu (29/05/19)

I looked up two top models and calculated their BMI and researched other facts about them:

Kendall Jenner

Age: 23 / born 3 November 1995

Weight: 54 kg

Height: 178 cm

BMI: 17 (underweight)

Measurements: 87-61-87 cm

Diet: Paleo diet, lean proteins, detox green tea

Workout: enjoys running

Fashion jobs: VS Angel, Calvin Klein Campaign, Marc Jacobs, Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana, Chanel

Also famous for: Keeping up with the Kardashians



Photo: Getty Images

Tara Lynn

Age: 36 / born 26 July 1982

Weight: 98kg

Height: 175cm

BMI: 32 (obese)

Measurements: 107-86-119 cm

Diet: organic food, cooking at home

Workout: does a lot of yoga

Fashion Jobs: H&M, Gloria Vanderbilt, Forever 21, Lane Bryant, S Moda

Also famous for: being one of the leading American plus-size models, Vogue, Elle, Time, Glamour



Photo: Getty Images

You can clearly see that both models are very successful young women, regardless of their size and weight.

But to end on a more positive note regarding fashion: What is a “fashion statement” anyway?

Well, basically everything that draws attention to the way you dress. Let it be a crazy skirt, very colourful trainers or an unusual print – everything can be a fashion statement if it makes you fashionable in a bold way and reflects the type of person that you are. However, not everybody likes to be the centre of attention. Thus, it takes a lot of courage to make a fashion statement. In doing so, you could either go the fun, challenging way or you could just stick to the basics.

I would like to give two examples of women who are well-known for making fashion statements in public, although they couldn't be more different in style:



Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake (2001)

I do not really have to explain why this red-carpet outfit of the world's two biggest pop icons from 2001 would count as a fashion statement. Back then, Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake were in a relationship and obviously decided to show off their couple status by wearing matching outfits. Nowadays, however, head-to-toe denim would only work for a bad taste party. But hey, fashion statements show courage (which these two must have had!) and change over time.

You can say without a doubt that Lauren Bacall is still to this day the princess of prints. She died on 12 August 2014 at the age of 89. This Hollywood icon left behind a legacy of style and glamour. Her style was simply and effortlessly glamorous – silk blouses, blazers, pencil skirts, sharply creased trousers – and continues to inspire today. Well-known for her acting in *To Have and Have Not* and *How to Marry a Millionaire*, she also modelled for Harper's Bazaar and Vogue. Dress shirt open and tucked into high-waisted pants, a long chain dangling below her braless sternum, sunglasses covering most of her face, her insouciant gaze and perfectly moulded waves made her, perhaps, the original embodiment of Effortless Glamour.



Photo: Keystone/Getty Images

Sources:

<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/body-mass-index>
<https://luxuryactivist.com/fashion/top-models-body-mass-index-health-red-alert/>
<https://www.marieclaire.com/health-fitness/news/g1208/celebrity-diet-fitness-trends/?slide=16>
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2511255/Experts-explain-dangerous-cotton-ball-diet-really-is.html>
www.yourweightlossaid.com/dangerous-cotton-wool-diet/
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/sboyd/2016/03/14/10-fashion-icons-and-the-trends-they-made-famous/#7fe3936c1268>
<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/beauty/fashion/g21528250/memorable-fashion-moments/>
<https://www.thecut.com/2014/08/lauren-bacall-knew-a-thing-or-two-about-style.html>
<https://www.cosmopolitan.com/health-fitness/a8475895/kendall-jenner-gunner-peterson-workout/>
<https://texasscribbler.com/tag/tara-lynn/>