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# Kids' wellbeing at risk over body image

PRIMARY school-aged children show an unhealthy concern with their body image, affecting their wellbeing, new research has found.

A study by Flinders University found children aged 11-12 worried about eating some foods and felt the need to find ways to prevent "fatness".

Lead author Stefania Velardo said children overemphasised the links between body

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size and their health, without acknowledging other aspects of health such as sleep and feeling good.

"For example, some children could reasonably avoid healthy food consumption across the five core food groups if they are already seen to have a socially acceptable body," Dr Velardo said. "How-

ever, more concerning is the potential for children's ideas about fatness to breed anxiety, shame and negative psychological experiences."

Dr Velardo said parents, health professionals and the government needed to find ways to encourage children to develop a more positive relationship with food.

"Children used words like fat, large, big, lazy and sick to

describe overweight individuals, constructing the image that a fat body is unhealthy, undesirable and unproductive," Dr Velardo said.

Previous studies found poor body image can trigger negative reactions and worsening mental health, proving public health initiatives about weight are often misunderstood and inadvertently cause body image anxiety.