# New #SkinnyTok trend fuels health risks and threatens body positivity gains



In recent discussions surrounding body image and societal standards, a new social media trend, referred to as #SkinnyTok, has emerged as a focal point of concern. Jenny Stevens, the Deputy Features Editor at The Guardian, recently highlighted this trend in a podcast. Stevens expresses deep alarm over TikTok users who share their extreme weight-loss journeys, emphasising that the algorithm actively promotes this potentially harmful content to younger audiences. She notes, “I’ve looked through that hashtag and I think, wow, some of these people are really, really unwell,” reflecting her worries that such exposure perpetuates unhealthy ideals, particularly for those already grappling with disordered eating.

The ramifications of #SkinnyTok are indeed serious. As outlined in multiple analyses, including studies on the influence of social media on mental health, this trend fosters the internalisation of toxic beauty standards and exacerbates diet culture. The pressure to conform to unrealistic body ideals can lead individuals to adopt extreme dieting practices, with potentially life-altering consequences. The emphasis on a thin physique as synonymous with health has led to an alarming increase in disordered eating behaviours among vulnerable populations.

Stevens also raises a critical issue regarding the media’s fixation on weight-loss drugs, such as Ozempic and Wegovy. These medications, initially developed for diabetes management, have gained popularity as quick-fix solutions for obesity. This surge has elicited concerns from health professionals, who argue that the emphasis on pharmaceutical remedies detracts from essential public health initiatives that promote holistic wellbeing. Furthermore, the high costs associated with these medications raise ethical concerns about accessibility and the potential deepening of health disparities across different socioeconomic groups.

The narrative around body image is further complicated by the reflections of Gina Tonic, author of *Greedy Guts: Notes From an Insatiable Woman*. She offers insight into the evolution of the body positivity movement, noting a stark decline in its visibility, particularly post-COVID. Tonic suggests that the pandemic brought health to the forefront of societal concerns, often penalising those who do not fit conventional health narratives. “Fatness is automatically associated with being unhealthy and has been for decades,” she points out. This pervasive belief has resulted in a renewed societal obsession with thinness, where the ideals of health and beauty collide to reinforce damaging stereotypes about body size and worth.

The resurgence of ultra-thin ideals, particularly influenced by the popularity of weight-loss drugs, raises significant questions for the fashion industry, especially concerning inclusivity for plus-size individuals. Recent analyses note that this trend threatens to reverse advancements made in the representation of diverse body types in fashion. Designers may feel pressured to align with the burgeoning thin ideal as societal narratives shift towards a singular notion of health, neglecting the importance of size diversity.

Collectively, these discussions illuminate the ongoing struggle with body image and the need for a more inclusive approach to health and beauty standards. The focus on thinness, often bolstered by social media platforms like TikTok and the promotion of weight-loss drugs, poses a threat not only to individual well-being but also to broader societal acceptance of varied body types. As such, it is crucial for media narratives and public health initiatives to foster a culture that celebrates diversity and prioritises mental health alongside physical appearance.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2025/may/30/what-happened-to-body-positivity-podcast), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2025/may/30/what-happened-to-body-positivity-podcast)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.openprivilege.com/lifestyle/health-wellness/skinnytok-and-its-harmful-effects-on-mental-health-67ff70e7cf1f9dc896a25ccb), [[7]](https://www.openprivilege.com/lifestyle/health-wellness/skinnytok-and-its-harmful-effects-on-mental-health-67ff70e7cf1f9dc896a25ccb)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.cuimc.columbia.edu/news/popularity-weight-loss-drugs-soars-weight-stigma-persists), [[5]](https://www.newsweek.com/ozempic-destroying-plus-size-fashion-1917184)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2025/may/30/what-happened-to-body-positivity-podcast), [[6]](https://www.cuimc.columbia.edu/news/popularity-weight-loss-drugs-soars-weight-stigma-persists)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2025/may/30/what-happened-to-body-positivity-podcast> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2025/may/30/what-happened-to-body-positivity-podcast> - In this podcast episode, Jenny Stevens, the Guardian’s deputy features editor, discusses the rise of #SkinnyTok on TikTok, where users document extreme weight-loss journeys. Stevens expresses concern over the algorithm promoting such content to young users, highlighting the potential harm to those with disordered eating. She also addresses the media's fixation on weight-loss drugs and their impact on vulnerable individuals. Additionally, Gina Tonic, author of 'Greedy Guts: Notes From an Insatiable Woman,' reflects on the origins of the body positivity movement and its diminished visibility in the current health-focused climate.
3. <https://www.openprivilege.com/lifestyle/health-wellness/skinnytok-and-its-harmful-effects-on-mental-health-67ff70e7cf1f9dc896a25ccb> - This article examines the detrimental effects of 'SkinnyTok' on mental health. It defines SkinnyTok as TikTok content promoting ultra-thin body ideals through extreme dieting and exercise videos. The piece discusses how exposure to such content leads to the internalisation of harmful beauty standards, perpetuates toxic diet culture, and increases the risk of disordered eating behaviours. The article underscores the need for awareness and critical engagement with social media content to mitigate these negative impacts.
4. <https://www.cuimc.columbia.edu/news/popularity-weight-loss-drugs-soars-weight-stigma-persists> - This article from Columbia University Irving Medical Center discusses the surge in popularity of weight-loss drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy, originally developed for diabetes management. It highlights concerns about weight stigma, noting that the media's focus on these drugs as quick fixes may overshadow essential public health efforts promoting healthy lifestyles. The piece also addresses the ethical implications of relying on pharmacological solutions for obesity and the potential exacerbation of health disparities due to the high costs of these medications.
5. <https://www.newsweek.com/ozempic-destroying-plus-size-fashion-1917184> - This Newsweek article explores the impact of weight-loss drugs like Ozempic on the plus-size fashion industry. It discusses how the increasing use of these medications is leading to a resurgence of ultra-thin body ideals, potentially reversing progress made in size inclusivity. Experts express concern that the focus on weight loss is influencing designers to favour straight-size models, thereby diminishing the diversity of body types represented in fashion.
6. <https://www.cuimc.columbia.edu/news/popularity-weight-loss-drugs-soars-weight-stigma-persists> - This article from Columbia University Irving Medical Center discusses the surge in popularity of weight-loss drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy, originally developed for diabetes management. It highlights concerns about weight stigma, noting that the media's focus on these drugs as quick fixes may overshadow essential public health efforts promoting healthy lifestyles. The piece also addresses the ethical implications of relying on pharmacological solutions for obesity and the potential exacerbation of health disparities due to the high costs of these medications.
7. <https://www.openprivilege.com/lifestyle/health-wellness/skinnytok-and-its-harmful-effects-on-mental-health-67ff70e7cf1f9dc896a25ccb> - This article examines the detrimental effects of 'SkinnyTok' on mental health. It defines SkinnyTok as TikTok content promoting ultra-thin body ideals through extreme dieting and exercise videos. The piece discusses how exposure to such content leads to the internalisation of harmful beauty standards, perpetuates toxic diet culture, and increases the risk of disordered eating behaviours. The article underscores the need for awareness and critical engagement with social media content to mitigate these negative impacts.