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Sisters more OK with body image

By Cheri F. Hodges
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A study shows black women have a healthier body image than their white counterparts. However, one of the study's writers says this can be a double edge sword when it come to the health of black women.

The study was written by Deborah Schooler, L. Monique Ward and Allison Caruthers of the University of Michigan and published in Psychology of Women Quarterly.

Ward said black women aren't as effected by images of tall, thin blonde women that contributes to depression and low self-esteem in millions of women and girls.

"Our sense of reading the media, black women see a range of characters in movies and on TV," she said.

Often times, Ward stated, the lead character of a show watched primarily by African Americans won't be thin.

In the nine-page study, titled "Who's that girl: Television's role in the body image development of young white and black women," black youth watch about two more hours of TV than white youth. But, the report states that due to the lack of black images on television, black women have fewer cases of eating disorders and less concern about weight.

The report went on to say, "African Americans gravitate to black-oriented media and express preference for programs with black characters."

An example is the UPN sitcom "The Parkers." The lead character, Nikki Parker, played by actress/comedian Mo'Nique is a full-figured black woman.

"Black girls interviewed report rejecting the images as both unattainable for themselves and as unimportant to others in the black community," the report stated.

According to the report, black girls value the opinions of friends, family and boyfriends regarding their body image. They don't compare themselves to white women on TV, but to black role models they know.

The report went on to say black women define beauty differently.

"Black women report defining beauty less in terms of weight and appearance and more as style movement and character."

While this trend is good in some aspects, Ward said it does present other problems for black women.

"It's a double-edge sword," she said. "There is a health crisis (in the black community). Many of us should be eating better, it would be nice if we were more active."

Ward said the study took about two years to complete. And the findings aren't surprising to blacks, she said.

"Black women already realized (the media didn't have an effect on them). This is a validation, we're showing science that media doesn't have the same effect on all people," Ward said.

Maintenance is a ticket to ride cheaper

With rising gas prices, simple tasks can save lots of cash



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Norman Garnes, owner of Independent Tire and Auto Service Center on Beatties ford Road, changes a car's oil. Routine maintenance not only prolongs a car's life, it also improves gas mileage.

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Rising gas prices may make you rethink driving on long trips, but doing a few simple things while driving can extend gas mileage and make that tank of gas go farther.

AAA of the Carolinas says gas prices aren't expected to drop any time soon and the average price for a gallon of regular gas in North Carolina is \$1.73.

This time last year, gas was 27 cents cheaper. Don't worry, though, says Sarah Davis, a AAA spokeswoman: prices in North Carolina aren't expected to climb to \$2 like some other states - like New York and California.

To keep from shelling out more money at the tank, keeping up with scheduled maintenance and slowing down are just some ways to make gas last.

"Speeds at 75 miles an hour cut gas mileage 10 percent," said Davis. "For every 5 miles you drive over 60 miles per hour is like paying 10 cents more per gallon."

Davis also said it's not a good idea to buy premium gas if your car doesn't call for it.

At most gas stations, premium is at least 30 cents more than regular gas. The U.S. Department of Energy also recom-

mends that drivers avoid excessive idling. The department's web site says: "Idling gets 0 miles per gallon. Cars with larger engines typically waste more gas at idle than do cars with smaller engines."

Using cruise control and using overdrive gears are two more ways to improve gas mileage, according to the Department of Energy.

Road rage, a common term for aggressive driving, not only drives up blood pressure, it decreases gas mileage. The department of energy advises drivers to drive sensibly. Aggressive driving (speeding, rapid acceleration and braking) wastes gas. It can lower gas mileage by 33 percent at highway speeds and by 5 percent around town, according to the website.

Norman Garnes, owner of Independent Tire & Auto Service Center on Beatties Ford Road, said tune-ups help gas mileage.

"Having the engine tuned up helps gas mileage, as well as proper tire pressure. Riding on the tires (with pressure too low) is bad for gas mileage and it also shortens the life of the tires," Garnes said.

According to the Rubber Manufacturers Association, tire pressure should be checked once a month. Guidelines for specific cars can be found on the vehicle placard on the door post, fuel door, glove box or owners' manual.



With fuel prices rising, auto maintenance is more important to improving mileage.