

Mothers & Daughters The Naked Truth

How will your body age? With 73 per cent of us admitting to working out to avoid inheriting our mother's shape, we ask six brave women to strip off to make the comparison

'I'm glad I've got my mum's body'

Leah Hobson, 35, is an image consultant from Barnard Castle, County Durham, and is married to Mark, 45, a civil engineer. She is a size 12 and weighs 10st 7lb.

'I'd love to look as good as Mum at her age. We share similar builds – both tall with long limbs – so I'm hopeful for the future. At 5ft 11in it's difficult to find clothes that fit me, but the upside is I have legs that go up to my armpits. They're my favourite body part. Mum loved her legs when she was my age. She constantly reminds me how she used to pose for the village fair in tiny bikinis. She's never been bashful.

'The only thing I'm not so keen on is my broad shoulders – another gift from Mum. So, I balance out my body by emphasising my hips with chunky skirts.

'Five years ago I noticed a roll of fat on my stomach that wasn't there in my 20s. It didn't upset me, but I knew if I wanted to stop it getting bigger I'd have to watch my diet and exercise more. I try to swim 25 lengths three times a week and do yoga every other morning. When I look at Mum's stomach I feel inclined to exercise even more. On the other hand, developing a softer belly and thicker waist is part of getting older and I think it would be wrong to do anything drastic to reverse that. Ageing doesn't worry me, and neither does being naked. Four years ago, some of my artist friends wanted life models to paint, so I set up a local agency, which I also model for. I don't think nudity should be a taboo. Mum has always encouraged me to be positive about the way I look. Being healthy is the most important thing, not fulfilling an impossible stereotype.'

'I love my legs – they're long and slim'

Kathy Burrage, 60, is a retired counsellor from Barnard Castle, County Durham. She has four children, Bethany, 36, Leah, 35, and twins Nathan and Luke, 31. She is a size 16 and weighs 12st.

'I'm a more mature version of Leah, although my face has never been as beautiful. I was tall and very skinny as a teenager, before putting on a stone and a half when I started taking the Pill at 20. After each child, I gained even more weight. Carrying twins made my tummy enormous. It's never been the same since, but I refuse to beat myself up over it. It's a mark of who I am and what I've been through as a mother.

'I would describe my figure now as womanly. I don't like the rolls around my middle and, after breastfeeding four children, my EE breasts are droopy, but I dress accordingly. When I have felt down about my extra weight, Leah has encouraged me to be confident. She's taught me that with the right clothes I can still look good. Three years ago, I started life-modelling for her agency. Being naked in front of strangers is surprisingly empowering.

'Ideally, I'd like to lose 7lb but I've never been bothered enough to diet seriously. Occasionally I cut down on carbs and eat more vegetables, but more in a bid to stay healthy than anything else. I'd certainly never consider surgery. I like my legs – they're long and slim. My shoulders aren't as broad as Leah's but I still try not to emphasise them. I started going to the gym three times a week last year to ease my bad back. I swim 12 lengths or spend 90 minutes on the treadmill and cross trainer. I do weights, stomach exercises, work on the Swiss ball and walk everywhere. I haven't lost weight but feel fitter. Like Leah, I think health is most important. I always encouraged her to hold her head up when she was younger as she had a tendency to stoop. I taught her to love her body and hope it's paid off.' *{continued}*





'I'd love an hourglass figure like Mum's'

Emily DeCosimo, 28, is a television presenter from Brentwood, Essex. She lives with her partner Leigh, 37, a personal trainer. She is a size 10 to 12 and weighs 9st 7lb.

'Mum never believes me when I say this, but I'm incredibly envious of her body. She's got voluptuous breasts and a nipped-in waist. I'd love an hourglass figure like hers. If I was her, I'd emphasise my chest with fitted dresses and V-neck tops. Instead, she covers up with trousers and baggy shirts. She doesn't make the most of herself. I wish she'd realise how great she looks.

'I, on the other hand, have inherited a more athletic shape from my dad. I like my long legs, but I've got a short torso and a thick waist that dieting or exercise won't change.

'My breasts did go from an A to a B cup when I went on the Pill in my early twenties, but they're still tiny. I would never have surgery though – I'm only prepared to do so much to improve the way I look.

'My boyfriend works as a personal trainer, so is good at forcing me to exercise. I run and go to the gym four times a week. He tells me I'm beautiful naked, but I'm still quite insecure and bad at taking compliments.

'Both my mum and dad put on weight in their fifties, and it worries me that I'll do the same. I know I need to cut back on chocolate and sweets to avoid middle-aged spread.

'My pale skin used to bother me and I'd go on a sunbed three times a week to get a tan, but I'm slowly learning to accept my complexion and don't even bother with fake tan now. I like what I see.'

'I'm learning to love my body again.'

Beverley DeCosimo, 61, is a retired carer from Brentwood, Essex. She has two daughters, Nina, 32, and 28-year-old Emily. She is a size 16 and weighs 12st.

'Although I'm not particularly happy with the way I look, I know with a bit of effort I could be proud of my body again. Since I gave up smoking a year ago I've put on a stone and a half and my confidence has plummeted.

'I'm pear shaped. I don't mind my waist from a front-on view, but if I look down, I can't see my toes. I know Emily likes my 34E breasts but I don't have the confidence to show them off.

'When I was Emily's age I was ten stone and a size 14. When I started to get middle-aged spread in my fifties I tried diets but could never stick to them. I like to comfort eat.

'Emily has a beautiful body. She thinks she's pale, but I think she has a lovely skin tone. She's worried about putting on weight, but I don't think she'll let it happen. There's pressure on women her age to look good.

'My husband died of a heart attack two years ago and it's made me realise how precious good health is. I know I have to do something about my weight or it will only get worse. Next week I'm going to start eating healthily and power walking. Emily says I need to take care of myself more and she's right. My aim is to get back to ten stone and learn to love the way I look.'

'People think I'm ten years younger than my age'

Jane Dobbins, 59, is a radio presenter from Bournemouth. She is married to Andrew, 62, a sales executive, and has two daughters, Samantha, 38, and Nicola, 35. She weighs 10st and is a size 12.

'I don't like the idea of growing old. When I look in the mirror I'm very critical of my figure. My stomach's too rounded and my bum could be perkier. I wouldn't say I'm overweight, but since I was Samantha's age I've put on a stone.

'I was sad, rather than angry, when Samantha told me that she'd had implants. She's got a wonderful figure and I wish she'd realise it. Everywhere we go men whistle at her. I don't

get jealous – they did the same to me when I was her age, and still do sometimes.

'I found it easier to get back to my pre-pregnancy weight than Samantha because I breastfed for longer. It contracted my muscles, burned calories and got me into my old jeans within a month. I've also followed a low-fat diet and danced with an operatic society for decades, which has kept my weight down.

'Sometimes I eat chocolate, but only a couple of squares at a time. I have a pair of Levi's that I use to tell me if I'm getting too big. If they start to feel tight I cut down on my portion sizes. Getting older makes keeping fit harder, but I honestly don't think I look my age.

'I'm happier with my body than ever. Age has brought confidence and the ability to carry myself well. I hope Samantha feels the same way soon. I do think she will as she gets older.'



'Breast implants have done wonders for my self-esteem'

Samantha Roberts, 38, is a psychology student from Bournemouth. She is a single mother to Lauren, nine, Morgan, eight, and Adam John, two. She is a size eight and weighs 8st.

'I've never been as confident about my body as Mum, and don't really see much of myself in her. She's three inches taller than me with a bit more muscle. I think she looks amazing.

'I began to feel self-conscious about my body in my 20s, and developed bulimia at the age of 24. I'd recovered by my first pregnancy, but after having Morgan in 2004 I began to hate my figure again. It took 18 months to lose

three stone of pregnancy weight. Even after I did lose the weight nothing improved the appearance of my breasts, so I had implants to take them from a C to an E cup in 2008. They did wonders for my self-esteem.

'People are always shocked to hear I have three children, but then they don't know what I look like naked. I do 100 sit-ups a day, but the skin still sags on my stomach. If money were no object I'd have Botox and a tummy tuck.

'I wish I had as much confidence as Mum, although she doesn't like people knowing her age. She spends a lot on face and body creams but not as much as me. Ultimately, we're all ageing. It's how we adjust to it that's important.' ■

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