

EATING DISORDERS

Eating disorders are real, complex, bio-psycho-social diseases that can have serious consequences for health, productivity, and relationships. They are not fads, phases, or lifestyle choices. Anyone can develop an eating disorder regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity, culture, size, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation.

People struggling with an eating disorder often become obsessed with food, body image, and/or weight. These disorders can be life-threatening if not recognized and treated appropriately. The earlier a person receives treatment, the greater the likelihood of full recovery.

Symptoms

- Preoccupation with weight, food, calories, dieting, and/or body image.
- Development of abnormal, secretive, extreme, or ritualized food or eating habits.
- Withdrawal from usual friends and activities.
- Evidence of binge eating, such as the disappearance of a large amount of food.
- Evidence of purging behaviors, including frequent trips to the bathroom after meals, self-induced vomiting, periods of fasting, or laxative, diet pill, or diuretic abuse.
- Compulsive or excessive exercising.
- Discoloration or staining of the teeth.
- Feelings of isolation, depression, anxiety, or irritability.

Most common eating disorders:

- *Bulimia nervosa* - characterized primarily by a cycle of binge eating followed by compensatory behaviors, such as self-induced vomiting, in an attempt to counteract the effects of binge eating.
- *Anorexia nervosa* - characterized primarily by self-starvation and excessive weight loss.
- *Binge eating disorder* - characterized primarily by recurrent binge eating without the frequent use of compensatory measures. Dieting/restriction is a regular part of the disorder for most people.
- *Avoidant restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID)* - characterized primarily by limitations in the amount and/or types of food consumed, but does not involve any distress about body shape or size, or fears of fatness.
- *Other eating disorders include:* rumination disorder, pica, other specified feeding or eating disorder, and unspecified feeding or eating disorder.

Treatment

- Eating disorders require the care of a trained professional with expertise in the treatment of eating disorders.
- The most effective treatment involves some form of psychotherapy or counseling, coupled with careful attention to medical and nutritional needs.
- Treatment should be tailored to the patient's individual issues.
- Treatment must address the eating disorder symptoms as well as psychological, biological, nutritional, interpersonal, and cultural forces that contribute to or maintain the disorder.
- Early diagnosis and intervention significantly enhance recovery.



Content adapted from

https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/sites/default/files/brochures/Eating_Disorder.pdf