

Eating Disorders

Do you:

- feel that others pressure you to be thin?
- feel guilty about what you eat?
- feel that your weight is one of the only things you can control?
- feel you've become isolated from family and friends?
- prefer to eat alone?
- use food as a comfort?
- consume large amounts of food in a brief amount of time?
- feel fat despite others telling you that you're not?
- ever exercise excessively?
- ever induce vomiting after eating or drinking?
- count all the hidden calories or grams of fat in each bite of food?
- often feel depressed and unhappy with yourself?
- diet excessively?
- use laxatives, diet pills, or diuretics each week?
- weigh yourself several times each day?
- eat when you're lonely, anxious, depressed, or nervous?
- think that you might have an eating disorder?

If you answered yes to five or more of these questions, you may have an eating disorder. An eating disorder is not just about eating, body weight, and dieting; it is much more than that. Please remember that an eating disorder is something that can be treated with therapy and hard work. You **can** begin to eat successfully. . .and normally.

Some Definitions:

Eating disorders may be divided into two categories: anorexia and bulimia.

Anorexia is usually defined as willful starvation--deliberate and obsessive starvation in the pursuit of thinness.

Bulimia is usually defined as a craving for food which often results in overeating followed by purging--either by vomiting, laxatives, or exercise.

Although most people who suffer from eating disorders are female, males may also become bulimic or anorexic.

Who's at Risk?

- females, especially those in traditionally masculine cultures
- certain subcultures where weight is restricted--runners, dancers, etc.
- someone with early physical development
- someone who was overweight in childhood
- someone who needs social approval
- someone who has difficulty asserting needs
- someone with poor impulse control
- someone with a family history of substance abuse
- someone who has been sexually abused

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- someone who engages in prolonged dieting
- someone with a high need for control
- someone with an obsessive need for perfection

Symptoms:

Many of the symptoms of eating disorders are similar; however, each disorder is somewhat different. If someone is anorexic, you might expect to see the following: an extremely thin person; an over-achiever; a perfectionist; an isolated individual; loneliness; black-white thinking; an obsessive preoccupation with food--obtaining, cooking, and eating; all-encompassing fatigue; extreme sensitivity to cold; compulsive exercise; distorted body image; and lack of menstrual period. If someone is bulimic, you might expect to see symptoms such as: the use of food as a comforter; laxative or diuretic abuse; heart palpitations; mood swings; constant concern about body image and weight; quick trips to the bathroom after meals; either-or (dualistic) thinking; excessive exercise; some isolation; low self-esteem; and average body weight.

Health Risks:

Both forms of eating disorders are dangerous to health and can cause major problems, both now and in the future. Some of the immediate physical complaints include constantly feeling cold, bloodshot eyes with dark circles, finger calluses, dizziness, weakness, lackluster hair, moodiness, insomnia, no menstruation, swollen glands, weight loss, sore throat, or dry skin. Some of the long-term effects include extreme weight loss, gastrointestinal pain, diarrhea and/or constipation, malnutrition, loss of tooth enamel, metabolism disruption, heart attack, electrolyte imbalance, permanent damage to internal organs, kidney failure, and death.

How to help...

If you suspect that a friend has an eating disorder, please remember that help is available at the Student Counseling Center. The following suggestions may also help you to help your friend.

DON'T:

- tell her she's crazy
- blame her
- gossip about her
- follow her around to check her eating or purging behavior
- ignore her
- reject her
- tell her to quit this ridiculous behavior
- feel you need to solve her problem

DO:

- listen with understanding
- appreciate her openness and the risk she took to share
- support her and be available
- give her hope
- gently suggest counseling

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Resources:

Campus Resources

Counseling And Health Services
Counseling Office
LSC 231
(253) 833-9111, ext. 2460

Local Resources

Eating Disorders Northwest
Children's Hospital
(206) 587-2377

Additional Resources

American Anorexia/Bulimia Association, Inc.
133 Cedar Lane
Teaneck, NJ 07666
(201) 836-1800

Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc.
P.O. Box 5102
Eugene, OR 97405
(503) 344-1144

Center for the Study of Anorexia and Associated Disorders
1 West 91st Street
New York, NY 10024
(212) 595-3449

National Association of Anorexia and Associated Disorders
Box 7
Highland Park, IL 60035
(312) 831-3438

National Anorexic Aid Society, Inc.
5796 Carl Road
Columbus, OH 43229

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