

Eating Disorders

Imagine a life free of food anxiety, where healthy eating habits fuel a successful, happy life.

Of all mental illnesses, eating disorders have the **HIGHEST MORTALITY RATE**. Never assume an eating disorder isn't a big deal.

Eating disorders occur when damaging eating behaviors become persistent. In addition to your mental and physical health being impacted, daily functioning becomes more difficult too. Your body's heart, bones, teeth, and digestive system don't receive the nutrition they need.

EATING DISORDER CAUSES

Complex interactions between genes, behavior, psychology, and the environment all can contribute toward an eating disorder. You'll frequently see an eating disorder coexist with another, such as depression, substance use, or anxiety.

ANOREXIA NERVOSA

A serious and life-threatening disorder, anorexia occurs when someone thinks they're overweight though they clearly

appear underweight. They obsess about their food intake and controlling their weight and shape. Other signs include:

- Extremely restricted eating
- Fear of gaining weight
- Lack of menstruation among girls and women

BULIMIA NERVOSA

Bulimia is characterized by frequently eating large amounts of food followed by purging or other behaviors that compensate for overeating. Purging can occur through forced vomiting or the use of laxatives or diuretics. Excessive exercise or exercising immediately after bingeing is another means of compensating for eating behaviors. Additional indicators include:

- Restriction of eating that leads to bingeing and purging
- Preoccupation with weight and body shape
- Feelings of shame or secrecy regarding their behavior

BINGE-EATING DISORDER

Unlike other eating disorders, binge-eating occurs when a person loses control over their food intake. However, the bingeing is not followed by purging or fasting. Individuals with this disorder are often overweight and experience shame or guilt, further reinforcing the behavior. They typically eat more food than intended, even if not hungry.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Proper nutrition, reducing excessive exercise, and eliminating purging behaviors are the foundations of any treatment plan. However, in the most severe cases, some patients may require hospitalization to treat malnutrition problems. Treatment plans typically include one or more of the following:

- Individual, group, and/or family therapy
- Medical care and monitoring
- Nutritional counseling
- Medication(s)

ACTION STEPS

- ✓ **Seek immediate help** – Write down your symptoms and any relevant information. This enables your doctor to pair you with the right treatment and support.
- ✓ **Fight temptation** – Frequently checking your body image or weight on the scale will not prove helpful. Explore alternative ways of coping to replace negative thoughts with more positive ones.

KEEP IN MIND

Overcoming an eating disorder is both possible and achievable. Communication with your support team, mental health professional, and doctor is key to getting you on your way to the life you've always wanted.

What steps will you take today to move beyond an eating disorder?