



# Eating Disorders

Millions of Americans suffer from an eating disorder; many are women but men can have eating disorders too. There are many kinds of eating disorders such as Anorexia Nervosa, Binge Eating Disorder, and Bulimia Nervosa.

## Anorexia Nervosa

A person does not eat even when they are hungry

### Signs of Anorexia

#### Obsession with being thin and a large loss of weight

- Not wanting to eat and complaining of eating too much after eating a normal or small amount
- Checking weight frequently

**Changes in the body such as hair loss, feeling cold even if it isn't cold, or menstrual periods stopping or becoming irregular**

### Problems from Anorexia

#### Heart problems

- Without enough nutrients from food, blood pressure and heart rate slow leading to heart problems and possibly a heart attack

#### Changes in skin, bones, hair, and menstrual periods

- Fine hair all over the body, including the face
- Dry, scaly skin
- Decrease in bone density leading to brittle bones (osteoporosis)

#### Starvation

- Fainting, overall weakness, muscle loss, and even death

#### Decrease in cognitive functioning

- Difficulty thinking and solving problems

## Binge Eating Disorder

A person often eats large amounts of food over a short amount of time

### Signs of a Binge Eating Disorder

#### Eating much more than a normal amount of food in a short period of time

- Not being able to control eating or stop eating once started
- Eating when not hungry or already full

#### Eating in secret in order to eat more food

### Problems from Binge Eating

#### Higher risk for certain diseases and joint problems

- Increased risk for obesity and Type II Diabetes Mellitus
- Too much wear and tear on joints from extra weight

#### High blood pressure and high cholesterol

- Risk of heart disease, heart attack, or stroke

#### Gallbladder disease

- Causes severe pain in the abdomen or back

## Bulimia Nervosa

A person eats a large amount of food, even if they are not hungry (binging) and then vomits, uses laxatives, or over exercises (purging)

### Signs of Bulimia

#### Trying to keep from gaining weight in unhealthy ways

- Vomiting (throwing up food) on purpose to control weight
- Using laxatives, water pills or diet pills to control weight
- Not eating (fasting) or exercising a lot after binging to control weight

#### Hiding food for binges

Close to normal weight, but weight goes up and down

### Problems from Bulimia

#### Stomach and esophagus rupture

- The stomach can rupture while binging
- The esophagus can rupture while vomiting

#### Kidney problems

- Caused by severe dehydration from vomiting or using laxatives regularly

#### Dental problems

- Stomach acid from vomiting can cause tooth decay or staining

#### Heart problems and possible heart failure

- Irregular heartbeats caused by electrolyte imbalances from dehydration

#### Irregular bowel movements and constipation

- Overuse of laxatives can permanently upset bowel movements

## Eating Disorder Treatment

Treatment is necessary because eating disorders have social, emotional and physical causes and can be difficult to stop without help

### Get Help

- Talking to your health care provider about your eating disorder and how to best get help is the most important thing you can do
- Seeing a dietician can help you learn how to pick out healthy food, eat healthy portions, and eat at regular times so you can develop a healthy relationship to food
- Talking to a professional therapist or counselor to address the emotional parts of an eating disorder like anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem can be very helpful
- Joining a support group for people with the same disorder can help

## Preventing Eating Disorders

Parents, caregivers, educators, and health care providers can help prevent eating disorders by promoting positive body image and healthy habits

### Encourage a healthy lifestyle

#### Involve your kids in physical activities

- Limit television and computer use
- Encourage sports, dance, walking, biking and other physical activities

#### Teach your kids to eat healthy foods

- Teach kids to eat to satisfy hunger with healthy, nutritional food choices
- Encourage eating only when hungry and not eating when not truly hungry
- Do not soothe or calm kids with unhealthy foods or too much food

### Educate

- Teach your kids about the changes their bodies will have during puberty
- Take time to discuss social pressures and self image

### Lead by example

- Do not be negative about your body, your kid's body or other people's bodies
- Eat a healthy diet, but do not practice restrictive dieting
- Have an active lifestyle that includes regular exercise