

Identifying Eating Disorders

The information provided is from the [Mayo Clinic website](#) on eating disorders. Please [visit their site](#) for more information and resources.

Eating disorders are serious conditions related to persistent eating behaviors that negatively impact your health, your emotions and your ability to function in important areas of life. The most common eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge-eating disorder.

Most eating disorders involve focusing too much on your weight, body shape and food, leading to dangerous eating behaviors. These behaviors can significantly impact your body's ability to get appropriate nutrition. Eating disorders can harm the heart, digestive system, bones, teeth and mouth, and lead to other diseases.

Eating disorders often develop in the teen and young adult years. With treatment, you can return to healthier eating habits and sometimes reverse serious complications caused by the eating disorder.

Anorexia nervosa:

Often called anorexia — is a potentially life-threatening eating disorder characterized by abnormally low body weight, intense fear of gaining weight, and a distorted perception of weight or shape. People with anorexia use extreme efforts (limiting calories, excessive exercise, laxatives/diet aids) to control their weight and shape, which often significantly interferes with their health and life activities.

Bulimia nervosa:

Commonly called bulimia — is a serious, potentially life-threatening eating disorder. When you have bulimia, you have episodes of bingeing and purging that involve feeling a lack of control over your eating. Many people with bulimia also restrict their eating during the day, which often leads to more binge eating and purging.

Binge-eating disorder:

When you have binge-eating disorder, you regularly eat too much food (binge) and feel a lack of control over your eating. You may eat quickly or eat more food than intended, even when you're not hungry, and you may continue eating even long after you're uncomfortably full.

A new round of bingeing usually occurs at least once a week. You may be normal weight, overweight or obese.

Red flags that may indicate an eating disorder include:

- Skipping meals or making excuses for not eating
- Adopting an overly restrictive vegetarian diet
- Excessive focus on healthy eating
- Making own meals rather than eating what the family eats
- Withdrawing from normal social activities
- Persistent worry or complaining about being fat and talk of losing weight
- Repeatedly eating large amounts of sweets or high-fat foods
- Use of dietary supplements, laxatives or herbal products for weight loss
- Excessive exercise
- Leaving during meals to use the toilet
- Eating much more food in a meal or snack than is considered normal
- Expressing depression, disgust, shame or guilt about eating habits
- Eating in secret

If you have any symptoms or concerns, please speak with a parent/guardian, health care provider or counselor right away.