

Eating Disorders

Information and Resources

People with eating disorders have an obsession with food, weight, and/or body shape.

Eating disorders tend to develop in adolescence and affect both males and females, although they are more common in females.

Common Eating Disorders

Anorexia nervosa. One of the most recognizable eating disorders, the following are characteristics of someone who is anorexic:

- ▶ greatly restricts the amount of food he/she eats
- ▶ is underweight, often severely
- ▶ avoids eating in front of others
- ▶ is very fearful of gaining weight

Bulimia nervosa. Individuals with bulimia eat unusually large amounts of food in a short period of time and then purge (vomit, use laxatives, and/or exercise excessively).

Binge-eating disorder. This is one of the most common eating disorders. Those who binge-eat often do the following:

- ▶ eat excessive amounts of food to the point of being painfully full
- ▶ lack self control when it comes to eating
- ▶ feel shame and guilt following eating
- ▶ eat alone or in secret

The above aren't the only eating disorders, but they are the most common, and some of the most dangerous.

Risks of eating disorders

Eating disorders negatively impact one's physical and emotional health. The preoccupation with food, body shape, and/or weight can make it very difficult to focus on other things, and to enjoy life. There are also the following serious physical risks.

- ▶ Anorexia nervosa is associated with bone thinning, brittle nails and hair, infertility, and even heart, brain, and organ failure. If left untreated, anorexia can be fatal.
- ▶ Bulimia nervosa can cause sore throat, tooth decay, dehydration, heart attack, and stroke.
- ▶ Individuals with binge-eating disorder often experience issues associated with obesity, such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

Eating disorders can be treated

If you're suffering from an eating disorder, know that with help, you can get better. The first step to recovery is to recognize that you have a problem. You then need to reach out for support—talk to a counselor, family member, or person you trust.

These support resources are also available.

- ▶ National Eating Disorders Association: Call the helpline at 1-800-931-2237 or chat online at nationaleatingdisorders.org
- ▶ Eating Disorder Hope: Call 1-855-783-2519 or visit eatingdisorderhope.com

Secrecy and shame commonly accompany eating disorders, which can make it hard to ask for help. However, eating disorders do not go away on their own. Individuals suffering from these conditions need help and support to overcome them.