



*Make Prevention a CHOICE*

## Eating Disorders

**Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa** are eating disorders that affect as many as five million American men and women.

- **Anorexia**

- Involves people who intentionally starve themselves when they are already underweight
- Those affected are intensely afraid of gaining weight
- Individuals have a distorted perception of the shape or size of their bodies
- One percent of teenage girls in the U.S. develop Anorexia
- Up to 20% of those who are diagnosed may die as a result of the disorder

- **Bulimia**

- Involves the consumption of large amounts of food during “binge” episodes
- Individuals feel out of control of their eating
- Episodes can last anywhere from a few minutes to several hours
- Bulimics resort to inappropriate and physically damaging behavior to prevent weight gain

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

#### **Anorexia Nervosa**

Significant loss of weight with continued dieting  
Distorted perception of body weight/shape  
Intense fear of gaining weight  
Depression, anxiety  
Ceasing of the menstrual cycle  
Excessive exercising  
Lying about or hoarding food  
Constipation  
Yellow tinge to the skin  
Wearing baggy clothes to hide weight loss  
Cold hands and feet  
Baby fine hair growth on arms, legs and back

#### **Bulimia Nervosa**

Binging, or eating uncontrollably  
Purging by vomiting, laxative or diuretic use  
Excessive exercise  
Depression, mood swings  
Hiding food  
Self-worth determined by body shape/weight  
Irregular periods in 50% of cases  
Sore throat, dental problems  
Vomiting blood  
Intense fear of gaining weight  
Weakness, exhaustion  
Heartburn, indigestion

## **MEDICAL COMPLICATIONS:**

Low red/white cell count  
Low blood pressure  
Heart failure  
Irregular heart beat  
Pancreatitis  
Anemia  
Osteoporosis  
Kidney damage

Aspiration (inhaling vomit)  
Rupture of stomach or esophagus  
Neuromuscular/kidney disorders  
Heart abnormalities  
Pancreatitis  
Cavities  
Electrolyte imbalance

## **CAUSES OF EATING DISORDERS:**

The cause of eating disorders is unknown. A psychiatric cause is likely, but its nature is unclear.

- One view holds that the disorders begin in response to inadequate or destructive interpersonal relationships in families that are goal-oriented and highly achieving.
- Depression and obsessive-compulsive behavior frequently accompany the disorders, especially Bulimia.
- Some studies have suggested that a genetic component may be involved. Genetic studies have found that Anorexia is five times as likely to co-occur in identical twins than fraternal or non-twin siblings, which suggests a biological component in the onset of the disorder.
- Cultural issues are important. The quest for health and slimness is a powerful force in modern society and may reinforce the fear of fatness in patient's with an eating disorder or tip the borderline case into overt disease.
- Dancers have a high prevalence in developing Anorexia Nervosa, 10 times that of the general population.
- Runners, often seek to decrease body fat to very low levels (5 to 7 percent of bodyweight).

## **TREATMENT:**

There is no specific treatment for either Anorexia or Bulimia. The intense fear of becoming fat and the overestimation of body size results in powerful resistance to therapy. There are several intervention techniques that are helpful in treating both disorders. These include but are not limited to:

- Medical attention
- Psychiatric and psychological intervention
- Behavior modification techniques
- Group and family therapy
- Antidepressant medication

### **Note:**

It is important to be aware that depression and antisocial behavior can develop in individuals with Bulimia, therefore psychotherapy and/or psychiatric treatment will most likely be required.

## **How to Contact Us**

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