



Treatments and Therapies

Adequate nutrition, reducing excessive exercise, and stopping purging behaviors are the foundations of treatment. Treatment plans are tailored to individual needs and may include one or more of the following:

- Individual, group, and/or family psychotherapy
- Medical care and monitoring
- Nutritional counseling
- Medications

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Eating Disorders

Anorexia and Bulimia

DEFINITION

There is a commonly held view that eating disorders are a lifestyle choice.

Eating disorders are actually serious and often fatal illnesses that cause severe disturbances to a person's eating behaviors.

Obsessions with food, body weight, and shape may also signal an eating disorder.

Common eating disorders include **anorexia nervosa**, **bulimia nervosa**, and **binge-eating disorder**.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

ANOREXIA NERVOSA

People with anorexia nervosa may see themselves as overweight, even when they are dangerously underweight. People with anorexia nervosa typically weigh themselves repeatedly, severely restrict the amount of food they eat, and eat very small quantities of only certain foods. Anorexia nervosa has the highest mortality rate of any mental disorder.

Symptoms include:

- Extremely restricted eating
- Extreme thinness (emaciation)
- A relentless pursuit of thinness and unwillingness to maintain a normal or healthy weight
- Intense fear of gaining weight
- Distorted body image, a self-esteem that is heavily influenced by perceptions of body weight and shape, or a denial of the seriousness of low body weight

BULIMIA NERVOSA

People with bulimia nervosa have recurrent and frequent episodes of eating unusually large amounts of food and feeling a lack of control over these episodes. This binge-eating is followed by behavior that compensates for the overeating such as forced vomiting, excessive use of laxatives

or diuretics, fasting, excessive exercise, or a combination of these behaviors. Unlike anorexia nervosa, people with bulimia nervosa usually maintain what is considered a healthy or relatively normal weight.

Symptoms include:

- Chronically inflamed and sore throat
- Swollen salivary glands in the neck and jaw area
- Worn tooth enamel and increasingly sensitive and decaying teeth as a result of exposure to stomach acid
- Acid reflux disorder and other gastrointestinal problems

RISK FACTORS

Eating disorders frequently appear during the teen years or young adulthood but may also develop during childhood or later in life. These disorders affect both genders, although rates among women are 2½ times greater than among men. Like women who have eating disorders, men also have a distorted sense of body image.

Researchers are using the latest technology and science to better understand eating disorders. One approach involves the study of human genes. Eating disorders run in families. Researchers are working to identify DNA variations that are linked to the increased risk of developing eating disorders.