

Eating Disorders

Eating disorders involve serious disturbances in eating behavior – extreme and unhealthy reductions of food intake or severe overeating - as well as feelings of distress or extreme concern about body shape or weight

Fact

- More than **5 million** Americans experience eating disorders
- Approximately **10%** of individuals with eating disorders are **males**
- **11 million** Americans are fighting with a life and death battle with an eating disorder

Sources: Harvard Eating Disorders Center (HEDC), National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA)

What eating disorders are there?

1. **Anorexia nervosa** is characterized by self-starvation and **excessive weight loss**. Between **5-20%** of individuals struggling with **anorexia** will die from the disorder. (Source: HEDC)
2. **Bulimia nervosa** is characterized by a cycle of **binging** (excessive over-eating) and **purging** (getting rid of the food by vomiting or using laxatives) to compensate for the effects of binging. Individuals suffering from **bulimia** often appear to be of average body weight. Between **10-15%** of those diagnosed with **bulimia nervosa** are men. (Source: HEDC)

What problems can eating disorders cause?

Anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and **binge-eating** disorder are potentially **life-threatening** diseases, which affect the mind and body simultaneously. People who suffer from eating disorders can experience a wide range of **physical health complications**, including serious heart conditions and kidney failure which can, in extreme cases, lead to **death**. In addition, eating disorders cause an overall decrease in body metabolism, therefore people who have suffered from eating disorders are not able to metabolize as efficiently as those with normal eating patterns.

Spotting the signs and symptoms

Warning signs of **anorexia nervosa** include:

- dramatic weight loss
- preoccupation with weight, food, calories, dieting, fat grams etc
- refusal to eat certain foods, avoiding of situations involving eating food
- frequent comments about being “fat” or overweight despite weight loss
- excessive, rigid exercise regimen
- withdrawal from usual friends and activities

Warning signs of **bulimia nervosa** include:

- evidence of binge eating, including large amounts of food in short time periods
- evidence of purging behaviors, including frequent bathroom trips after meals

- signs of vomiting, presence of laxatives
- excessive, rigid exercise regimen
- usually swelling of the cheeks or jaw area, discoloration of teeth, calluses on back of hands and knuckles from self-induced vomiting
- withdrawal from usual friends and activities

Source: National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)

Individuals who participate in **sports with subjective scoring**, or where **body shape and size are a factor in performance** (such as wrestling, dancing, swimming, running and gymnastics), are **more at risk for eating disorders** than individuals who do not compete in such sports

For more information:

General Information and Resources

<http://www.anad.org/site/anadweb/section.php?id=2118>

Information Index

http://www.edap.org/p.asp?WebPage_ID=294

Signs of an Eating Disorder in your Child

http://www.family.msn.com/tool/article.aspx?dept=health&sdept=hsy&name=ff_eating_disorders&ptnr=ff

Understanding Eating Disorders

www.hedc.org

Worrisome Trends

http://www.family.msn.com/tool/article.aspx?dept=health&sdept=hsy&name=me_090403_toothin&signup=true#Scene_1