

Eating Disorders

Eating Disorders are a group of serious conditions in which you are so preoccupied with food and weight that you can focus on little else. Dieting is okay; eating disorders can destroy your life and your health.

Dieting can be about losing a little weight, usually in a healthy way.

Eating disorders are about trying to fix your whole life through eating or the avoidance of eating.

Eating disorders can be about seeking approval and acceptance from others. They can be about seeking ways to comfort yourself through intense emotions.

An eating disorder patient often thinks that life won't be good until they lose weight. They think that being thin will magically make all the pain go away, make them acceptable, and make life better.

An eating disorder patient sees very little value in self. They use the eating disorder and the loss of weight to establish a place where they can value self. They are unable to see other, more important, qualities in which they can find value.

Eating disorder patients compare themselves (generally their looks) incessantly with everyone they meet. I have actually never seen anyone heal from an eating disorder until they cease the constant comparisons.

There are three major types of eating disorders: Anorexia, Bulimia, and Binge Eating.

Anorexia symptoms may include:

An intense fear of gaining weight and/or an intense need to lose weight

Negative and distorted self-image

Excessive exercise

Lack of emotion

Social withdrawal

Low weight

Dizziness and fainting

Soft, downy hair on the body

Menstrual irregularities

Constipation

Abdominal pain

Dry skin

Often feeling cold when others are comfortable

Irregular heart rhythm

Low blood pressure

Dehydration

Bulimic symptoms may include:

Eating until the point of pain or discomfort, often with high-fat or sweet foods

Self-induced vomiting

Laxative use

Excessive exercise

Unhealthy focus on body and weight

Distorted, negative self image

Going to the bathroom during or after meals – for purpose of throwing-up the food

Feeling out of control with binge and/or purge behavior

Abnormal bowel function

Dental problems

Swollen salivary glands

Sore throat

Dehydration

Irregular heart bear

Sores, scars, calluses on knuckles

Menstrual irregularities

Constant dieting or fasting

Sometimes, drug and alcohol abuse

Binge-Eating Disorder symptoms may include:

Eating to the point of discomfort
Eating much more food during a binge episode than during a normal meal.
Eating fast during binge episodes

Feeling like your eating is out of control
Frequently hiding food and/or eating alone
Feeling depressed, disgusted, or upset about the amount of food intake

People hide their eating disorders, usually quite well, until family members or friends notice the extreme weight loss of the eating disorder behaviors.

Red flags that friends and family might notice include:

Skipping meals
Making excuses for not eating
Eating only “safe” foods
Adopting rigid meal or eating rituals
Cooking elaborate meals but refusing to eat.
Withdrawal from normal social activities
Persistent worry about being fat
Claiming to be fat when body weight is actually normal, even thin.

Not eating in public
Frequent checking in mirrors
Wearing baggy clothes
Repeatedly eating large amounts of sweet or high-fat foods
Use of dietary supplements or weight loss products
Constantly comparing self to others – usually in terms of weight