

Recognizing Eating Disorders

Eating disorders have mental, physical and serious medical consequences that can disrupt growth and development. Illnesses such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, or binge eating affect people of different genders, races, cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds.

LEARN TO RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Physical:

- ❖ *Excessive exercise (more than 4 hours daily)*
- ❖ *Weight loss or fluctuation in a short period of time*
- ❖ *Abdominal pain*
- ❖ *Feeling full or “bloating”*
- ❖ *Feeling faint or feeling cold*
- ❖ *Dry hair or skin, dehydration, or blue hands/feet*
- ❖ *Fine body hair*
- ❖ *Cavities and gum disease*
- ❖ *Absence of at least 3 consecutive menstrual cycles*

Behavioral:

- ❖ *Prevent weight gain by self induced vomiting or fasting*
- ❖ *Chaotic food intake*
- ❖ *Pretending to eat, throwing away food*
- ❖ *Exercising for long periods of time*
- ❖ *Constantly talking about food*
- ❖ *Frequent trips to the bathroom because of misuse of laxatives, vomiting, diuretic and enemas*
- ❖ *Wearing baggy clothes to hide a very thin body*
- ❖ *Often eating alone in discrete places*
- ❖ *Substance abuse*
- ❖ *Depression*

Emotional:

- ❖ *Denial of weight loss*
- ❖ *Complaints about appearance, particularly about being or feeling fat*
- ❖ *Sadness or comments about feeling worthless*
- ❖ *Perfectionist attitude*
- ❖ *Sense of lack of control of eating*
- ❖ *Feeling disgust, guilt or depression after overeating*

Individuals with eating disorders require professional help!

For more information about eating disorders, call the Eating Disorders Awareness & Prevention’s toll-free Hotline: 1-800-931-2237

Source: Office on Women’s Health. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Bodywise Handbook, 1999.
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