



EATING DISORDERS

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EATING DISORDERS ARE NOT JUST ABOUT EATING AND FOOD. THEY ARE SERIOUS, COMPLEX MATTERS THAT SEVERELY AFFECT A PERSON'S PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH. IF LEFT UNTREATED, EATING DISORDERS CAN BE FATAL.

The most common eating disorders are *anorexia*, *bulimia*, and *binge eating disorder*.

People with *anorexia* typically see themselves as fat, even though they aren't overweight, and are extremely focused on losing weight no matter how thin they become. Certain signs of anorexia are due to malnutrition and may include loss or thinning of hair, frequently feeling cold, and become progressively thinner. Other signs include a preoccupation with food; exercising obsessively; continuing to self-starve or restrict what they eat no matter how much weight they have lost; denial of hunger; striving for perfection, obsessive thinking and anxiety.

Bulimia is a cycle of repeatedly eating large amounts of food followed by some form of purging (e.g. self-induced vomiting, use of laxatives, obsessive exercising). Signs that someone is struggling with bulimia include an intense focus on weight; repeated, unsuccessful attempts at dieting; using food as a way of coping with stress; inability to voluntarily stop once overeating or "binge eating" has started; using the bathroom frequently after eating; swollen glands; frequent fluctuations in weight; acting impulsively; moodiness and depression.

Like with bulimia, people with *binge eating disorder* experience an out-of-control feeling while eating and consume large amounts of food even when they're not hungry. The out-of-control feeling can be described as a pressured urge to eat even after they feel full. Binges are followed by feelings of guilt and depression. Unlike bulimia, there is no form of purging after the binge. Other signs of binge eating disorder are eating rapidly or excessively, preferring to eat alone and having a very negative body image.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT EATING DISORDERS

Myth: Eating disorders only affect females.

Fact: Females, males, transgender and gender non-binary individuals of all ages, races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses can develop an eating disorder.

Myth: Eating disorders are a choice.

Fact: Eating disorders are caused by a combination of genetic, physical, social/environmental and psychological factors.

Myth: People with eating disorders are all skinny or someone has to be underweight to have an eating disorder.

Fact: Many people with eating disorders can be extremely ill yet look healthy and/or eat a range of foods and display a pattern of regular eating.

Myth: Eating disorders are a cry for attention.

Fact: People with eating disorders generally go to great lengths to hide their food-related habits, which is one of the reasons why early detection and intervention are important.

Myth: Once someone has an eating disorder, they have it for life.

Fact: Eating disorders are treatable. A full recovery from an eating disorder is possible. Early intervention and getting treatment is key. In most cases, willpower and other self-help tools do not sustain long-term recovery.

IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING SYMPTOMS OF AN EATING DISORDER, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO SEEK SUPPORT OR COUNSELING.

For free, confidential counseling for Gwynedd Mercy University students, contact:

Counseling Services | Griffin Complex | 2nd Floor
counseling@gmercyu.edu

