

Disordered Eating

Disordered eating falls on a spectrum and can include occasional bouts of unhealthy dieting to extreme patterns of excessive food restriction, bingeing and/or purging. Eating disorders are a persistent pattern that can put one's medical and physical well-being at risk and interfere with the ability to engage in daily responsibilities. Disordered eating can be accompanied by body image distortions, which interfere with the ability to view one's body realistically.

Early intervention is key to recovering from an eating disorder.

Facts about disordered eating:

- Eating disorders do not discriminate; any age, ethnicity, gender, and class can be affected.
- 4 in 10 Americans have suffered or have known someone who has suffered from an eating disorder.
- The risk of developing an eating disorder is 50-80% determined by genetics.
- 1 in 4 individuals with eating disorders are male.
- 9 percent of American women will suffer from anorexia in their lifetime.

National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) describes some eating disorders as:

- **Anorexia nervosa** is an eating disorder characterized by weight loss (or lack of appropriate weight gain in growing children); difficulties maintaining an appropriate body weight for height, age, and stature; and, in many individuals, distorted body image.
- **Bulimia nervosa** is characterized by a cycle of binge eating and compensatory behaviors such as self-induced vomiting designed to undo or compensate for the effects of binge eating.
- **Binge eating** is characterized by episodes of bingeing (eating large quantities of food in a short amount of time) without the purging behavior of Bulimia. According to the Binge Eating Disorders Association, BED is a complex problem that can result in serious physical, medical and emotional consequences.
- **Orthorexia** was coined in 1998 to describe an obsession with proper or 'healthful' eating. Although being aware of and concerned with the nutritional quality of the food you eat isn't a problem in and of itself, people with orthorexia become so fixated on so-called 'healthy eating' that they damage their own well-being.

Treatment Can Help

Effective treatment for eating disorders typically involves a team approach including individual therapy, nutritional counseling, and medical monitoring by a physician. If eating disorders surface during childhood and in the teen years, family therapy may also be indicated.

Medication

Doctors also may prescribe medication to help treat some symptoms of an eating disorder, or if an individual is also experiencing depression and/or anxiety. Any decision regarding the use of medication should be made with your doctor. Talk with your doctor about the best treatment for you.

Resources

National Eating Disorders Association: www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

The Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness: www.allianceforeatingdisorders.com

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, available 24 hours everyday: 1-800-273-8255

National Alliance on Mental Illness: www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Eating-Disorders