



EATING DISORDERS

Studies suggest that 1 in 20 people will be affected by an eating disorder at some point in their lives. Without treatment, eating disorders can take over a person's life and lead to serious, potentially fatal medical complications. Learn more.

What are Eating Disorders?

Eating disorders are a group of related conditions that cause serious emotional and physical problems. Each condition involves extreme food and weight issues. However, each has unique symptoms that separate it from the others.

Anorexia Nervosa

A person with anorexia will deny themselves food to the point of self-starvation. He or she will deny hunger and refuse to eat, practice binge eating and purging behaviors or exercise to the point of exhaustion in an attempt to limit, eliminate or "burn" calories.

Emotional symptoms of anorexia include irritability, social withdrawal, lack of mood or emotion, inability understand the seriousness of the situation, fear of eating in public and obsessions with food and exercise. Often, food rituals are developed or whole categories of food are eliminated from the person's diet.

Anorexia can take a heavy physical toll. The body is forced to slow down to conserve energy, causing irregularities or loss of menstruation, constipation and abdominal pain, irregular heart rhythms, low blood pressure, dehydration and trouble sleeping. Some people with anorexia might also use binge eating and purge behaviors, while others only restrict eating.

Bulimia Nervosa

Someone living with bulimia will feel out of control when binging on very large amounts of food during short periods of time, and then desperately try to rid him or herself of the extra calories using forced vomit-



Eating disorders are inaccurately associated with girls and women, but boys and men are also affected. Contrary to what many people think, eating disorders are serious mental illnesses, not just a desire to "look skinny."

ing, abusing laxatives or excessive exercise. This becomes a repeating cycle that controls many aspects of the person's life and has a very negative emotional and physical effects. People living with bulimia are usually normal weight or even a bit overweight.

Emotional symptoms of bulimia include low self-esteem overly linked to body image, feelings of being out of control, feeling guilty or shameful about eating and withdrawal from friends and family.

Like anorexia, bulimia will inflict physical damage. The binging and purging can severely harm the parts of the body involved in eating and digesting food. Teeth are damaged by frequent vomiting, and acid reflux is common. Excessive purging can cause dehydration that affects the body's electrolytes and leads to cardiac arrhythmias, heart failure and even death.



Get more information at: MyBurke.org/REAL
24-Hour Crisis Hotline: 1-800-392-8343
Appointments and Information: 936-634-5010

Binge Eating Disorder (BED)

A person with BED loses control over eating and eats a very large amount of food in a short period of time, even when not hungry or uncomfortably full. This can cause embarrassment, depression or guilt. A person with BED, after an episode of binge eating, does not attempt to purge or exercise excessively like someone living with anorexia or bulimia would. A person with binge eating disorder may be normal weight, overweight or obese.

Causes of Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are very complex conditions, and scientists are still learning about the causes. Although eating disorders all have food and weight issues in common, most experts now believe that eating disorders are caused by people attempting to cope with overwhelming feelings and painful emotions by controlling food. Unfortunately, this will eventually damage a person's physical and emotional health, self-esteem and sense of control.

Diagnosing Eating Disorders

A person with an eating disorder will have the best recovery outcome if he or she receives an early diagnosis. If an eating disorder is believed to be an issue, a doctor will usually perform a physical examination, conduct an interview and order lab tests. These will help form the diagnosis and check for related medical issues and complications.

In addition, a mental health professional will conduct a psychological evaluation. She may ask questions about eating habits, behaviors and beliefs. There may be questions about a patient's history of dieting, exercise, bingeing and purging.

Often, a person with an eating disorder will have symptoms of another mental health condition that requires treatment. Whenever possible, it is best to identify and address all conditions at the same time. This gives a person comprehensive treatment support that helps insure a lasting recovery.

How are Eating Disorders Treated?

Eating disorders are managed using a variety of techniques. Treatments will vary depending on the type of disorder, but will generally include the following.

- Psychotherapy, such as talk therapy or behavioral therapy.
- Medicine, such as antidepressants and anti-anxiety drugs.
- Nutritional counseling and weight restoration monitoring are also crucial. Family based treatment is especially important for families with children and adolescents because it enlists the families' help to better insure healthy eating patterns and increases awareness and support.

Helping Someone Who has an Eating Disorder?

If you or someone you know may have an eating disorder, seeing a mental health professional is the best first step. If you or someone you know is in crisis, get help quickly. In East Texas, Burke has a **24-Hour Crisis hotline: 1-800-392-8343**.

For general information and appointments, call Burke at 936 634-5010.

Resources

This content was developed from information posted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Visit www.nami.org for more information.



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