

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

Young women that have anorexia nervosa are 12 times more likely to die other women her age without anorexia. Anorexia has the highest mortality rate of all mental disorders. The mortality rate is about 5% for each decade and increases up to 20% for patients that have the illness for more than 20 yrs.

As you look at the medical complications below, understand that this is just a partial list. Also remember, it is entirely possible to FULLY recover from an eating disorder!

Mental Functioning:

- Feeling dull
- Feeling Listless
- Difficulty concentrating or focusing
- Difficulty regulating mood
- Associated mental disorders: depression, anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, substance abuse

Cardiovascular (Heart):

- Slow irregular, pulse
- Low blood pressure
- Dizziness or faintness
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Decreased potassium levels may result in life threatening cardiac arrhythmias or arrest
- Electrolyte imbalances may lead to life threatening cardiac arrhythmias or arrest

Muscular Skeletal (Bones):

- Stunted growth in children
- Stress fractures and broken bones more likely
- Osteoporosis

Mouth:

- Enamel erosion
- Loss of teeth
- Gum disease
- “Chipmunk cheeks”- swollen salivary glands from vomiting
- Sore throat because of induced vomiting

Esophagus:

- Painful burning in throat or chest
- May vomit blood from small tear(s) in esophagus
- Rupture of the esophagus, may lead to circulatory collapse and death

Endocrine System:

- Thyroid abnormalities
- Low energy or fatigue
- Cold intolerance
- Low body temperature
- Hair becomes thin and may fall out
- Development of fine body hair as the body's attempt to keep war

Stomach:

- Stomach may swell following eating or bingeing (causes discomfort and bloating)
- Gastric rupture due to severe binge eating (gastric rupture has an 80% fatality rate)
- Vomiting causes severe electrolyte imbalance which can lead to sudden cardiac arrest.

Intestines:

- Normal movement in intestinal tract often slows down with very restricted eating and severe weight loss
- Frequent Constipation
- Chronic irregular bowel movements

Complications Associated with Laxative Abuse:

- Kidney complications
- “Cathartic colon,” refers to the colon’s inability to function normally without the use of large doses of laxatives due to the destruction of the nerves in the colon that control elimination
- Electrolyte imbalance
- Dehydration
- Potassium depletion
- Laxatives are habit forming

Complications Associated with Ipecac Abuse :

- Toxic to heart (irregular heart beat, rapid heart rate, cardiac arrest)
- Sudden death

Source: Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders
www.anad.org