

MALES & EATING DISORDERS

ANOREXIA NERVOSA

Anorexia Nervosa is a severe, life-threatening disorder in which the individual refuses to maintain a minimally normal body weight, is intensely afraid of gaining weight, and exhibits a significant distortion in the perception of the shape or size of his body, as well as dissatisfaction with his body shape and size.

Behavioral Characteristics:

- Excessive dieting, fasting, restricted diet
- Food rituals
- Preoccupation with body building, weight lifting, or muscle toning
- Compulsive exercise
- Difficulty eating with others, lying about eating
- Frequently weighing self
- Preoccupation with food
- Focus on certain body parts; e.g., buttocks, thighs, stomach
- Disgust with body size or shape
- Distortion of body size; i.e., feels fat even though others tell him he is already very thin

Emotional and Mental Characteristics:

- Intense fear of becoming fat or gaining weight
- Depression
- Social isolation
- Strong need to be in control
- Rigid, inflexible thinking, “all or nothing”
- Decreased interest in sex or fears around sex
- Possible conflict over gender identity or sexual orientation
- Low sense of self worth -- uses weight as a measure of worth
- Difficulty expressing feelings
- Perfectionistic -- strives to be the neatest, thinnest, smartest, etc.
- Difficulty thinking clearly or concentrating
- Irritability, denial -- believes others are overreacting to his low weight or caloric restriction
- Insomnia

Physical Characteristics:

- Low body weight (15% or more below what is expected for age, height, activity level)
- Lack of energy, fatigue
- Muscular weakness
- Decreased balance, unsteady gait
- Lowered body temperature, blood pressure, pulse rate
- Tingling in hands and feet
- Thinning hair or hair loss
- Lanugo (downy growth of body hair)
- Heart arrhythmia
- Lowered testosterone levels

BULIMIA NERVOSA

Bulimia nervosa is a severe, life-threatening disorder characterized by recurrent episodes of binge eating followed by self-induced vomiting or other purging methods (e.g. laxatives, diuretics, excessive exercise, fasting) in an attempt to avoid weight gain.

Behavioral Characteristics:

- Recurrent episodes of binge eating: eating an amount of food that is definitely larger than most people would eat during a similar period of time and under similar circumstances
- A sense of lack of control over eating during binge episodes
- Recurrent purging or compensatory behavior to prevent weight gain: secretive self-induced vomiting, misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or fasting, compulsive exercise (possibly including excessive running, body building, or weight lifting)
- Hoarding of food, hiding food and eating in secret
- Frequently weighing self
- Preoccupation with food
- Focus on certain body parts; e.g., buttocks, thighs, stomach
- Disgust with body size or shape
- Distortion of body size; i.e., feels fat even though he may be thin

Emotional and Mental Characteristics:

- Intense fear of becoming fat or gaining weight
- Performance and appearance oriented
- Works hard to please others
- Depression
- Social isolation
- Possible conflict over gender identity or sexual orientation
- Strong need to be in control
- Difficulty expressing feelings
- Feelings of worthlessness -- uses weight, appearance, and achievement as measures of worth
- Rigid, inflexible "all or nothing" thinking

Physical Characteristics:

- Weight fluctuations
- Loss of dental enamel due to self-induced vomiting
- Edema (fluid retention or bloating)
- Constipation
- Swollen salivary glands
- Cardiac arrhythmia due to electrolyte imbalances
- Esophageal tears, gastric rupture
- Lack of energy, fatigue

BINGE EATING DISORDER

Binge eating disorder is a severe, life-threatening disorder characterized by recurrent episodes of compulsive overeating or binge eating. In binge eating disorder, the purging in an attempt to prevent weight gain that is characteristic of bulimia nervosa is absent.

Behavioral Characteristics:

- Recurrent episodes of binge eating
- Eating much more rapidly than normal
- A sense of lack of control over eating during binge episodes
- Eating large amounts of food when not feeling physically hungry
- Hoarding food
- Hiding food and eating in secret; e.g., eating alone or in the car, hiding wrappers
- Eating until feeling uncomfortably full
- Eating throughout the day with no planned mealtimes

Emotional and Mental Characteristics:

- Feelings of disgust, guilt, or depression during and after overeating
- Binge eating often triggered by uncomfortable feelings such as anger, anxiety, or shame
- Binge eating used as a means of relieving tension, or to “numb” feelings
- Rigid, inflexible “all or nothing” thinking
- Strong need to be in control
- Difficulty expressing feelings and needs
- Perfectionistic
- Works hard to please others
- Avoids conflict, tries to “keep the peace”
- Disgust about body size, often teased about their body while growing up
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Social isolation
- Depression
- Moodiness and irritability

Physical Characteristics:

- Heart and blood pressure problems
- Joint problems
- Abnormal blood-sugar levels
- Fatigue
- Difficulty walking or engaging in physical activities

Source: National Eating Disorders Association www.nationaleatingdisorders.org