

# About Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are real, treatable medical illnesses in which eating becomes an obsession; they are not due to a lack of will or an exaggerated behavior for attention. The main types of eating disorders are anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. People who suffer from eating disorders can experience a wide range of health complications, including serious heart conditions and kidney failure which can lead to death. Recognition of eating disorders early as real and treatable diseases is important.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, eating disorders occur in nearly 15% of the population. Questions to ask yourself:

- Do you have an extreme fear of gaining weight or becoming fat even though you are within your weight limit?
- Are you distressed about your body shape or composition?
- Have you had a recurrent episode of binge eating followed by purging, fasting or intense exercise because you feel guilty about the calories you consumed?
- If you are a female, have you had missing or infrequent or missing periods for an otherwise unexplained reason?

If you or someone you know answered yes to any of these questions or have any other concerns about eating habits, it is wise to seek help.

## SCHEDULING AN APPOINTMENT

The University Health Service (UHS) and the University Counseling Center (UCC) have staff members who are trained to help students with eating disorders and can refer you to outside agencies, if necessary.

All full-time students have a primary care provider (PCP) at the University Health Service. Your PCP can help you with any concern. To schedule an appointment with your PCP, call UHS at 275-2662. All visits to UHS are confidential. The mandatory health fee paid by all full-time students covers the cost of the visit with your PCP. Visits to the University Counseling Center are scheduled by calling 275-3113. Up to ten visits a year are covered by the mandatory health fee. Group therapy is also available. All visits to UCC are confidential.

## LINKS

ANRED - Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc.  
<http://www.anred.com/>

Eating Disorders Awareness and Prevention, Inc.  
<http://www.edap.org/>

Mirror-Mirror  
<http://www.mirror-mirror.org/eatdis.htm>

Overeaters Anonymous Headquarters  
<http://www.oa.org/index.htm>

## ANOREXIA NERVOSA

*Symptoms of anorexia include:*

- Resistance to maintaining body weight at or above a minimally normal weight for age and height.
- Intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat, even though underweight.
- Disturbance in the way in which one's body weight or shape is experienced, undue influence of body weight or shape on self-evaluation, or denial of the seriousness of the current low body weight.
- Infrequent or absent menstrual periods (in females who have reached puberty).

People who suffer from this disorder see themselves as overweight even though they are sometimes dangerously thin. The process of eating often becomes an obsession. Unusual eating habits emerge, some include avoiding food and meals, picking out a few foods and eating these in small quantities, or carefully weighing and portioning food. People with anorexia may repeatedly check their body weight, and many engage in other techniques to control their weight, such as intense and compulsive exercise, or purging by means of vomiting and abuse of laxatives, enemas, and diuretics.

## BULIMIA NERVOSA

*Symptoms of bulimia include:*

- Recurrent episodes of binge eating, characterized by eating an excessive amount of food within a discrete period of time and by a sense of lack of control over eating during the episode.
- Recurrent inappropriate compensatory behavior in order to prevent weight gain, such as self-induced vomiting or misuse of laxatives, diuretics, enemas, or other medications (purging); fasting; or excessive exercise.
- The binge eating and inappropriate compensatory behaviors both occur, on average, at least twice a week for 3 months.
- Self-evaluation is unduly influenced by body shape and weight.

Because purging or other retrospective compensatory behavior follows binge-eating episodes, those with bulimia usually weigh within the normal range for their age and height. However, they may fear gaining weight, have a desire to lose weight, and feel intensely dissatisfied with their bodies. People with bulimia usually purge in secrecy, feeling disgusted and ashamed when they binge, yet relieved once they purge.

Source for this site: [National Institute of Mental Health](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/)