



Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are very common today, but frequently go undetected due to their secretive nature. It's important to be aware of the signs and symptoms so you can recognize that you have a problem - or that someone you know may be struggling.

The following signs and symptoms may have originated from something besides an eating disorder. It is important to have a medical examination when evaluating your situation.

ANOREXIA NERVOSA: A severely distorted perception of one's physical appearance. This mindset leads to actions including: self-starvation and excessive exercise rooted in an intense fear of gaining weight. Some signs and symptoms of anorexia look like this:

- Physical-Continual weight loss, irregular periods, dizziness, fainting spells, low body temperature (complaining of being cold), pale complexion and dry skin, dry brittle hair or hair that is falling out, growth of facial and body hair, easy bruising, exhaustion and fatigue
- Emotional-Intense fear of weight gain, excessive need for control, distorted body image, and dramatic mood swings
- Behavioral-Wearing loose clothing, deception (hiding food in napkins or clothes), abuse of laxatives, diet pills, or diuretics, obsession with caloric and fat content of food, compulsive exercise, making excuses not to eat, isolating or avoiding social events, consuming a lot of non-caloric foods (diet soda, gum, or coffee), avoiding restaurants and eating in front of others, ritualistic behaviors at meals (cutting food into small pieces, eating food in a particular order), discomfort with or avoiding being touched, defensiveness when questioned about weight, hyperactivity, and depression

BULIMIA NERVOSA: Identified by compulsive overeating leading to self-induced vomiting. The abuse of laxatives and diuretics is commonly used in an attempt to purge the body of food. Some signs and symptoms of bulimia look like this:

- Physical-Bingeing and purging, constant sore throat, broken blood vessels in eyes, dramatic weight fluctuation, digestive problems, swollen neck glands and puffy cheeks, scrape wounds on knuckles (due to contact between knuckles and teeth to induce vomiting), eroding of tooth enamel and increased cavities
- Emotional-Self-criticism and poor body image, poor impulse control (drugs, alcohol, spending, moods), and promiscuity
- Behavioral-Expressing guilt after eating, avoiding restaurants and eating in front of others, abusing laxatives, diet pills, ipecac, diuretics and/or enemas, frequently going into the bathroom right after meals, showering after meals, hiding food throughout the house, alternating between eating large amounts of food and self-starvation

BINGE-EATING DISORDER: Identified by consuming large quantities of food in an uncontrolled manner. Some of the signs and symptoms of binge-eating disorder look like this:

- Physical-Rapid weight gain
- Emotional-Poor body image, depression, and excessive guilt
- Behavioral-Eating large amounts of food, eating late at night, sexual avoidance, hiding food throughout the house, eating to the point of physical discomfort, avoiding social events, eating without an appetite, isolating, and sleeping often during the day