



Treatment of Eating Disorders

- Eating disorders are serious health conditions that can be both physically and emotionally destructive.
- People with eating disorders need to seek professional help.
- Early diagnosis and intervention may enhance recovery.
- Eating disorders can become chronic, debilitating, and even life-threatening conditions.

Treatment is available. Recovery is possible.

What Does Treatment Involve?

The most effective and long-lasting treatment for an eating disorder is some form of psychotherapy or counseling, coupled with careful attention to medical and nutritional needs. Some medications have been shown to be helpful. Ideally, whatever treatment is offered should be tailored to the individual, and this will vary according to both the severity of the disorder and the patient's individual problems, needs and strengths.

- ★ Typically care is provided by a licensed health professional, including but not limited to a psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, nutritionist, and/or primary care physician.
- ★ Care should be coordinated and provided by a health professional with expertise and experience in dealing with eating disorders.

Treatment must address the eating disorder symptoms, as well as psychological, biological, interpersonal and cultural forces that contribute or maintain the eating disorder. Nutritional counseling is also necessary and should incorporate education about nutritional needs and planning for and monitoring rational choices of the individual patient.

Many people with eating disorders respond to outpatient therapy, including individual, group or family therapy and medical management by their primary care provider. Support groups, nutrition counseling, and psychiatric medications under careful medical supervision have also proven helpful for some individuals.

Inpatient care (including hospitalization and/or residential care in an eating disorders specialty unit or facility) is necessary when an eating disorder has led to physical problems that may be life-threatening or when an eating disorder has reached a level of severe psychological or behavioral problems. Inpatient stays typically require a period of outpatient follow-up and aftercare to address the underlying issues in the individual's eating disorder.

The exact treatment needs of each individual will vary. It is important for individuals struggling with an eating disorder to find a health professional they trust to help coordinate and oversee their care.

