



Eating disorder signs, symptoms, and behaviors



ANOREXIA NERVOSA

- Dramatic weight loss
- Dresses in layers to hide weight loss
- Is preoccupied with weight, food, calories, fat grams, and dieting
- Refuses to eat certain foods, progressing to restrictions against whole categories of food (e.g., no carbohydrates, etc.)
- Makes frequent comments about feeling “fat” or overweight despite weight loss
- Complains of constipation, abdominal pain, cold intolerance, lethargy, and excess energy
- Denies feeling hungry
- Develops food rituals (e.g., eating foods in certain orders, excessive chewing, rearranging food on a plate)
- Cooks meals for others without eating
- Consistently makes excuses to avoid mealtimes or situations involving food
- Maintains an excessive, rigid exercise regiment – despite weather, fatigue, illness, or injury, the need to “burn off” calories taken in
- Withdraws from usual friends and activities and becomes more isolated, withdrawn, and secretive
- Seems concerned about eating in public
- Has limited social spontaneity
- Resists maintaining body weight at or above a minimally normal weight for age and height
- Has intense fear of weight gain or being “fat,” even though underweight
- Has disturbed experience of body weight or shape, undue influence of weight or shape on self-evaluation, or denial of the seriousness of low body weight
- Postpuberty female loses menstrual period
- Feels ineffective
- Has strong need for control
- Shows inflexible thinking
- Has overly restrained initiative and emotional expression

BINGE EATING DISORDER (Compulsive Eating Disorder)

- Evidence of binge eating, including disappearance of large amounts of food in short periods of time or lots of empty wrappers and containers indicating consumption of large amounts of food
- Develops food rituals (e.g., eats only a particular food or food group [e.g., condiments], excessive chewing, doesn't allow foods to touch)
- Steals or hoards food in strange places
- Hides body with baggy clothes
- Creates lifestyle schedules or rituals to make time for binge- sessions
- Skips meals or takes small portions of food at regular meals
- Has periods of uncontrolled, impulsive, or continuous eating beyond the point of feeling comfortably full
- Does not purge
- Engages in sporadic fasting or repetitive dieting
- Body weight varies from normal to mild, moderate, or severe obesity



BULIMIA NERVOSA

- In general, behaviors and attitudes indicate that weight loss, dieting, and control of food are becoming primary concerns
- Evidence of binge eating, including disappearance of large amounts of food in short periods of time or lots of empty wrappers and containers indicating consumption of large amounts of food
- Evidence of purging behaviors, including frequent trips to the bathroom after meals, signs and/or smells of vomiting, presence of wrappers or packages of laxatives or diuretics
- Appears uncomfortable eating around others
- Develops food rituals (e.g., eats only a particular food or food group [e.g., condiments], excessive chewing, doesn't allow foods to touch)
- Skips meals or takes small portions of food at regular meals
- Steals or hoards food in strange places
- Drinks excessive amounts of water
- Uses excessive amounts of mouth-wash, mints, and gum
- Hides body with baggy clothes
- Maintains excessive, rigid exercise regimen – despite weather, fatigue, illness, or injury, the need to “burn off” calories
- Shows unusual swelling of the cheeks or jaw area
- Has calluses on the back of the hands and knuckles from self-induced vomiting
- Teeth are discolored, stained
- Creates lifestyle schedules or rituals to make time for binge-and-purge sessions
- Withdraws from usual friends and activities
- Looks bloated from fluid retention
- Frequently diets
- Shows extreme concern with body weight and shape
- Has secret recurring episodes of binge eating (eating in a discrete period of time an amount of food that is much larger than most individuals would eat under similar circumstances); feels lack of control over ability to stop eating
- Purges after a binge (e.g., self-induced vomiting, abuse of laxatives, diet pills and/or diuretics, excessive exercise, fasting)
- Body weight is typically within the normal weight range; may be overweight

OTHER EATING DISORDERS

- Any combination of the above

KEY SOURCES

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www.bulimiaguide.org