

ANOREXIA NERVOSA

Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder of self-inflicted starvation in which the individual, usually a young woman, loses 25 percent or more of her normal body weight. An anorexic eats little or no food and often exercises vigorously. An anorexic feels fat even though s/he is very thin, and thinks that eating even a normal amount will cause weight gain.

SYMPTOMS

- Intense fear of becoming fat, which does not diminish when weight is lost
- False body image (person “feels fat” even when very thin)
- Constant preoccupation with food and dieting
- Excessive weight loss (25% of normal body weight)
- Amenorrhea (loss of menstrual period) in females
- Hyperactivity or compulsive exercise
- Extreme moodiness
- Social isolation
- Strong feelings of insecurity, loneliness, inadequacy and helplessness
- Perfectionism

BULIMIA

Bulimia is an eating disorder characterized by bingeing and purging. Bingeing is the rapid consumption of food, usually in large amounts, and is typically followed by an intense feeling of guilt and an attempt to rid oneself of the food just consumed in a purge. Purges may take the form of self-induced vomiting, use of laxatives, dieting, or exercise. Bulimics are overconcerned with weight, body image, and food. They suffer from psychological difficulties such as depression and low self-esteem.

SYMPTOMS

- Preoccupation with eating/food and body shape/weight
- Secretive binge eating
- Fear of loss of control over eating and weight

- Menstrual irregularities
- Weight fluctuations due to bingeing and fasting, dieting, and vigorous exercise
- Vomiting
- Laxative abuse
- Physical changes, such as swollen glands
- Eroded tooth enamel
- Depression
- Irritability
- Low self-esteem

COMPULSIVE OVEREATING

Compulsive overeating is characterized by extensive food intake for the purpose of coping with stress, emotional conflicts, and daily problems. Uncontrolled eating is followed by feelings of guilt and shame, as well as weight gain. Dieting is used as an attempt to control overeating but ultimately fails because alternate coping mechanisms are not found to replace the eating behaviors. Failed dieting leads to further frustration and despair which is numbed with a return to overeating.

SYMPTOMS

- Eating when not hungry
- Eating to escape from worries or trouble or for no reason
- Guilt after overeating
- Preoccupation with food, weight, and body image
- Secretive bingeing
- Lifestyle determined by weight (e.g., social isolation)
- Repeated failed dieting
- Low self-esteem
- Depression