

## EATING DISORDERS

Eating disorders are behavioral conditions characterized by severe and persistent disturbance in eating behaviors and associated distressing thoughts and emotions.

They can be very serious conditions affecting physical, psychological and social function.

Types of eating disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder, avoidant restrictive food intake disorder, other specified feeding and eating disorder, pica and rumination disorder. Taken together, eating disorders affect up to 5% of the population, most often develop in adolescence and young adulthood.

Several, especially anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are more common in women, but they can all occur at any age and affect any gender.

Eating disorders are often associated with preoccupations with food, weight or shape or with anxiety about eating or the consequences of eating certain foods.

Behaviors associated with eating disorders including restrictive eating or avoidance of certain foods, binge eating, purging by vomiting or laxative misuse or compulsive exercise. These behaviors can become driven in ways that appear similar to an addiction.

Eating disorders often co-occur with other psychiatric disorders most commonly, mood and anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and alcohol and substance use disorders. Evidence suggests that genes and heritability play a part in why some people are at higher risk for an eating disorder, but these disorders can also afflict those with no family history of the condition. Treatment should address psychological, behavioral, nutritional and other medical complications.

The latter can include consequences of malnutrition or of purging behaviors including, heart and gastrointestinal problems as well as other potentially fatal conditions. Ambivalence towards treatment, denial of a problem with eating and weight, or anxiety about changing eating patterns is not uncommon. With proper medical care, however, those with eating disorders can resume healthy eating habits, and recover their emotional and psychological health.