Anorexia Nervosa

Symptoms¹
- Resistance to maintaining body weight at or above minimally normal weight for age and height
- Intense fear of weight gain or being “fat”
- Disturbance with body weight or shape, undue influence of weight or shape on self-evaluation, or the denial of serious low body weight
- Loss of menstrual period in girls and women post-puberty

Warning Signs¹
- Dramatic weight loss
- Preoccupation with weight, food, calories, fat grams, and dieting
- Refusal to eat certain foods, denial of hunger, & avoiding meal times
- Frequently feeling “fat” or over weight despite weight loss
- Anxiety about gaining weight or being fat
- Development of food rituals (eating foods in order, excessive chewing, rearranging food on plate)
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Excessive rigid exercise regimen
- Behaviors and attitudes that show a lot of concern about weight loss, dieting, and control of food

Health Risks¹
- Abnormally slow heart rate and blood pressure. *(Risk of heart failure increases as heart rate and blood pressure decrease.)*
- Reduction of bone density, muscle loss and weakness
- Severe dehydration which can result in kidney failure
- Fainting, fatigue, and overall weakness
- Dry hair and skin, hair loss is common
- Growth of lanugo, a downy layer of hair, all over the body including the face in order to keep the body warm

Statistics¹
- 90-95% of sufferers are girls and women
- Anorexia Nervosa has the highest death rates of any mental health condition & it’s one of the most common psychiatric disorders in women
- Anorexia Nervosa typically appears in early to mid-adolescence

TYPES
1. Anorexia Nervosa
2. Bulimia Nervosa
3. Binge Eating Disorder
4. Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified
5. What to do if you or someone you know is experiencing eating and body image issues?

Anorexia Nervosa is a serious, potentially life threatening eating disorder characterized by self-starvation and excessive weight loss.
Bulimia Nervosa

Symptoms
- Regular intake of large amounts of food accompanied by a sense of loss of control over eating behavior
- Regular use of self-induced vomiting, laxative or diuretic abuse, fasting, and/or obsessive or compulsive exercise
- Extreme concern with body weight and shape

Warning Signs
- Evidence of binge eating includes large amounts of food disappearances in short periods of time or finding wrappers and containers indicating a large consumption of food
- Evidence of trips to bathrooms after meals, signs and or smells of intentional vomiting, presence of wrappers and packages for laxatives or diuretics
- Excessive rigid exercise regimen
- Unusual swelling of the cheeks or jaw
- Calluses on the back of the hand and knuckles from self-induced vomiting
- Discoloration or staining of the teeth
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Creation of lifestyle schedules or rituals to make time for binge-and-purge sessions
- Behavior and attitudes indicating weight loss, dieting, and food control are becoming primary concerns
- Continued exercise despite injuries; overuse injuries

Health Risks
- Electrolyte imbalances which can lead to irregular heartbeats and possibly heart failure and even death.
- Inflammation and possible rupture of the esophagus from vomiting
- Tooth decay and staining from stomach acids released during frequent vomiting
- Chronic irregular bowel movements and constipation as a result of laxative abuse
- Gastric rupture is an uncommon but possible side effect of binge eating

Statistics
- Bulimia affects 1-2% of adolescent and young adult women
- Approximately 80% of Bulimia Nervosa patients are female
- People struggling with Bulimia Nervosa appear to be of average weight
- Most people struggling with Bulimia Nervosa know that their behaviors are not normal and not healthy
- Feelings of depression and changes in social settings are common
- Risk of death from suicide or medical complications is markedly increased for eating disorders
Binge Eating Disorder (BED)

**Symptoms**
- Frequent episodes of eating large amounts of food in short periods of time
- Feeling out of control over their eating behavior
- Feeling depressed, guilty, or disgusted by the behavior
- Behavioral indicators of BED include: eating when not hungry, eating alone because of embarrassment over quantities consumed, eating until uncomfortably full

**Health Risks**
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol levels
- Heart disease
- Diabetes mellitus
- Gallbladder disease
- Musculoskeletal problems

**Statistics**
- The prevalence of BED is estimated to be approximately 1-5% of the general population
- BED effects women slightly more than men-estimates indicate that about 60% of people struggling with BED are female and 40% are male
- People struggling with BED can be normal or heavier than average weight
- BED is often associated with symptoms of depression
- Comorbid conditions with BED: PTSD/ADHD/Bipolar, type II/Anxiety Disorders/Substance Abuse
- People struggling with BED often express distress, shame, and guilt over their eating behaviors
- People with BED report a lower quality of life than people with a non-binge eating disorder

Binge Eating Disorder (BED) is a severe, life threatening disorder characterized by recurrent episodes of compulsive overeating or binge eating. In binge eating disorders, the purging to prevent weight gain that is a characteristic of bulimia nervosa, is absent.
Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (EDNOS)

The following are some common examples of eating disorders not otherwise specified, but your experience may be different. If you are concerned about your eating and exercise habits and your thoughts and emotions concerning food, activity and body image, we urge you to consult an ED expert.¹

Examples¹
- Menstruation is still occurring despite meeting all other criteria for anorexia nervosa
- All conditions are present to qualify for anorexia nervosa except the individual’s current weight is in the normal range or above
- Purging or other compensatory behaviors are not occurring at a frequency less than the strict criteria for bulimia nervosa
- Purging without binging- sometimes known as purging disorder
- Chewing or spitting out large amounts of food without swallowing
What can I do if I think a friend is experiencing eating and body image issues?

- Learn as much as you can about eating disorders.
- Know the difference between facts and myths regarding weight, nutrition, and exercise.
- Be Honest. Talk about your concerns around struggling with eating or body image problems.
- Be caring, but be firm. Care for your friend but be careful not to become manipulated by them. Do not make certain promises such as “I promise I won’t tell anyone else”
- Compliment. Let your friend know of the characteristics that you admire most about them. Remind them that “true beauty” is not skin deep.
- Be a good role model in regard to sensible eating, exercise, and self-acceptance.
- Tell someone. People struggling with anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, or binge eating disorders do need professional help.

Who you can reach out to if you think you or a friend may be experiencing an eating disorder?

If you are experiencing any of the above symptoms of an eating disorder or if you are concerned about your eating, exercising, and thought behaviors and are wanting help or someone to talk to, contact the:

- **UNK Women’s Center** at 308-865-8279
- **UNK Counseling Care** at 308-865-8248
- For a Free Online Eating Disorder Screening you can visit the UNK Counseling Care page or [click here](http://www.unk.edu/counseling/).

References


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