

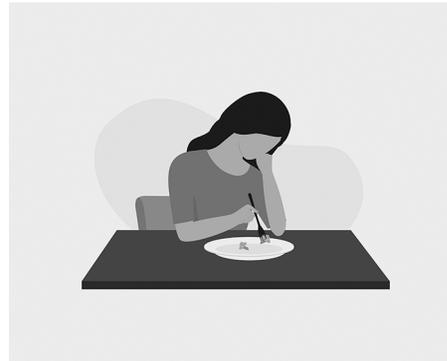
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT EATING DISORDERS

In the Clinic
Annals of Internal Medicine

What Is an Eating Disorder?

Eating disorders are serious illnesses that can result in dangerous complications, including death, if they are untreated. Eating disorders are characterized by severe disturbances in eating habits that are often focused on avoiding weight gain. People with eating disorders may also struggle with depressed mood, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and substance use disorders.

Eating disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge-eating disorder, and avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder. Your doctor can diagnose an eating disorder by asking questions, performing a physical examination, and ordering tests.



Who Is at Risk for an Eating Disorder?

No one group is protected from developing an eating disorder, but some groups are at higher risk, including:

- Adolescents and young adult females
- Athletes, models, and dancers
- Those with a family history of eating disorders

What Are the Warning Signs of an Eating Disorder?

- Obsessing over body weight, calories, and food
- Fear of gaining weight
- Binge eating
- Using diet pills or laxatives to avoid gaining weight
- Self-inducing vomiting after meals
- Lying about eating or refusing to eat
- Exercising too much to avoid weight gain
- Weakness
- Fainting
- Dizziness
- Irregular periods
- Slow pulse
- Low blood pressure
- Low body temperature
- Hair loss
- Dehydration
- Nutritional deficiencies
- Anxiety
- Low mood
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder

How Are Eating Disorders Treated?

Treatments vary depending on what eating disorder you are diagnosed with, but they generally focus on behavior change. Treatment is tailored to meet individual needs and often includes:

- Individual and/or family counseling with a mental health professional
- Diet and nutrition guidance
- Medical care and monitoring
- Referral to a specialist for treatment
- Antidepressant medication
- Hospitalization for patients who are malnourished and medically and/or psychiatrically unstable

Questions for My Doctor

- What other clinicians should I see for treatment of my eating disorder?
- How often should I follow up with my doctor after diagnosis?
- Where is the best setting to treat my eating disorder?
- Should I stop drinking alcohol if I am diagnosed with an eating disorder?
- What should I do if I was doing well but my eating disorder comes back?

For More Information



National Eating Disorders Association

www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

Mayo Clinic

www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/eating-disorders/symptoms-causes/syc-20353603