

## Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are a serious mental health condition characterized by intense preoccupation with food and weight. They affect millions of people around the world. Eating disorders can have significant health implications and can even be life threatening. Treatment often includes psychotherapy, nutrition education, family counseling, medication, and hospitalization. (Mayo Clinic:

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/eating-disorders/basics/definition/con-20033575>)

Eating disorders are classified into four major categories: Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia, Binge Eating Disorder, and Eating Disorders Not Otherwise Specified.

### **Anorexia Nervosa:**

An obsession with food and being thin, sometimes to the point of self-starvation

### **Bulimia:**

Episodes of bingeing and purging

### **Binge-eating Disorder:**

Regularly eating excessive amounts of food without purging; eating often triggers feelings of guilt and can lead to more bingeing

### **Eating Disorders Not Otherwise Specified:**

Diagnosed when a person is struggling with eating disorder thoughts, feelings, or behaviors but does not have all of the symptoms of anorexia or bulimia

Red flags that may indicate an eating disorder include:

- Skipping meals
- Making excuses for not eating
- Eating only a few certain "safe" foods, usually those low in fat and calories
- Adopting rigid meal or eating rituals, such as cutting food into tiny pieces or spitting food out after chewing
- Cooking elaborate meals for others, but refusing to eat them themselves
- Collecting recipes
- Withdrawing from normal social activities
- Persistent worry or complaining about being fat
- A distorted body image, such as complaining about being fat despite being underweight
- Not wanting to eat in public

- Frequent checking in the mirror for perceived flaws
- Wearing baggy or layered clothing
- Repeatedly eating large amounts of sweet or high-fat foods
- Use of syrup of ipecac, laxatives, the over-the-counter weight-loss drug orlistat (Alli), or over-the-counter drugs that can cause fluid loss, such as menstrual symptom relief medications
- Use of dietary supplements or herbal products for weight loss
- Food hoarding
- Leaving during meals to use the toilet
- Eating in secret

**Resources:**

Multi-Service Eating Disorders Association(MEDA) 617-558-1881

[www.medainc.org](http://www.medainc.org)

National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) 800-931-2237

[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)

Maudsley Parents [maudsleyparents.org](http://maudsleyparents.org)

**Literature:**

Help Your Teenager Beat an Eating Disorder by James Lock, MD, Ph.D. & Daniel LeGrange, Ph.D.

Brave Girl Eating: A Family's Struggle with Anorexia by Harriet Brown

Eating Disorders: A Parent's Guide by Rachel Bryant-Waugh & Bryan Lask

Eating with Your Anorexic by Laura Collins

My Kid is Back: Empowering Parents to Beat Anorexia Nervosa by June Alexander & Daniel LeGrange, Ph.D.