

Healthy Living

Bulimia Nervosa and Anorexia Nervosa

We are constantly bombarded by what I refer to as “the perfect ones”. The thinner than normal actresses and models that are more than 15% below the expected weight for their age and height. The famous writer and theater critic Dorothy Parker once said "no woman can be too rich or too thin," a catchphrase that is still referred to today. Many people associate fat with ugliness and failure and it has become an obsession, which for some people turns into a mental and physical disease. Both of these are eating disorders that you may or may not have heard of before.

Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder best described by extremely low body weight for age and height and or with body image distortion (always believing that they are “fat” even though they are underweight) and with an obsessive fear of gaining weight. Individuals are known to control body weight commonly through the means of voluntary starvation, excessive exercise, or other weight control measures such as diet pills or diuretic drugs. Although the condition primarily affects adolescent females, approximately 10% of people with the diagnosis are male.

Ways to help identify a person with Anorexia Nervosa:

- Extreme weight loss
- Body Mass index of less than 17% in adults or 85% expected weight in children
- Thinning hair
- Feeling cold or chilled all the time
- Fragile appearance
- Tooth Decay
- Extreme fatigue
- Fainting
- Distorted body image
- Low self esteem
- And many others

Bulimia nervosa ("bulimia") is another eating disorder best described by repeatedly bingeing (eating large quantities of food quickly) then purging (self-induced vomiting, using laxatives or diuretics) exercising excessively or fasting. Bulimics believe their self-worth depends on body shape and weight.

Typically bulimics are usually aware of their behavior and are unable or unwilling to stop. Most stay within their normal body weight range. They may be slightly over or underweight. Bulimics typically do it secretly because they are ashamed of their behavior. The average age people start bulimia is 18 years, but it occurs in children as young as 9 and adults into their mid-40s.

Several triggers can start the onset of bulimia, including family problems, problems in romantic relationships, and failure in school and work, pressure by peers or improper critique of physicality by coaches, teachers, or boy/girl friends.

Diagnosis/Treatment

Both of these disorders have mental as well as physical issues that contribute to them. If you see these symptoms in your child you should consult your doctor right away about the treatment you need to take.

Prevention

Talk to your children about being, eating and living healthy. Lead them by example in making good food choices and exercising regularly to maintain a healthy weight.

(Information courtesy of Wikipedia, The mental health channel.com, the women's health channel.com)