



Eating Disorders: An Overview

Eating disorders are illnesses that can affect how we eat and how we feel about food. They can be treated to help people lead healthy and full lives.

People who have eating disorders have unhealthy ways, or patterns, of eating. Without treatment, an eating disorder can take over a person's life and cause serious illness and death. These disorders can increase risk for osteoporosis and heart problems. People who have eating disorders can also have depression and anxiety, and may turn to alcohol and drugs for relief.

Most common types of eating disorders

The three most common types of eating disorders are:

- **Anorexia nervosa:** starving oneself by eating very little or nothing at all.
- **Bulimia nervosa:** when a person binges, or eats an extreme amount of food all at once, and then purges—vomits, takes laxatives or diuretics (water pills)—to rid the body of food.

- **Binge eating disorder:** when a person can't control the desire to overeat and often keeps the extreme eating a secret.

What causes eating disorders?

No one knows for sure what causes eating disorders. It is known, though, that these disorders can't be willed or wished away—treatment is needed. If you or someone you know has an eating disorder, don't wait to get help.

Seeking help

Support is important when you or someone you know has an eating disorder. Tell someone you trust about your problem. It may be a family member, friend, counselor, religious or community leader or doctor. Talking to a mental health professional is a good place to start. Seeing a health care provider as soon as you can is important too. Your doctor can help you get the help you need for your eating disorder. You can also learn about healthier ways to eat.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Call ValueOptions today.
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