

# Eating Issues

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On the way to work, on the radio, I heard two interesting things. One was that chain restaurants in Connecticut could soon be required to post calorie counts for their menu items. The House of Representatives gave final legislative approval and sent it to Governor Rell. The other interesting thing was that in a study done on middle age adults there are more obese adults and less exercising than in the past. It seems that despite all the education that is going on, Americans are getting fatter and less active. Children, too, seem to suffer from this fate.

Also, did you know? Nearly 10 million females and 1 million males in the U.S. are battling eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia while millions more suffer from binge eating. More than 1 in 4 normal dieter's progresses to pathological dieting. (National Eating Disorder.org)

This month we will explore the eating disorders listed above and the resources available to help people who are suffering and their loved ones. We will also talk about the specific issues to children and males who struggle with eating disorders. We will briefly discuss some of the options medically available to people who are obese.

If you would like to talk about this or any other issues, please call Solutions Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for free, confidential assessment, short term counseling and referral when needed.

Let's talk about the prominent eating disorders, which are anorexia, bulimia and binge eating. Due to the amount of information on the above, we will need to give an overview with resources for further information and help with these disorders.

## Anorexia Nervosa

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

### Warning signs

- Dramatic weight loss
- Preoccupation with weight, food, calories, fat grams, and dieting
- Refusal to eat certain kinds of food
- Frequent comments about feeling "fat" or overweight despite weight loss
- Anxiety about gaining weight or being "fat"
- Denial of hunger
- Development of food rituals
- Consistent excuses to avoid mealtimes or situations involving food
- Excessive, rigid exercise regimen
- Withdrawal from usual friends and activities

## Bulimia Nervosa

Bulimia Nervosa is a serious, potentially life-threatening eating disorder characterized by a cycle of bingeing and compensatory behaviors such as self-induced vomiting designed to undo or compensate for the effects of binge eating.

### Warning signs

- Evidence of binge eating
- Purging behaviors (vomiting, laxative or diuretic use)
- Excessive rigid exercise regimen
- Unusual swelling of the cheeks or jaw area

- Calluses on the back of the hands and knuckles from self-induced vomiting
- Withdrawal from usual friends and activities

### Compulsive Overeating

- People suffering with compulsive overeating have what is characterized as an “addiction” to food, using food and eating as a way to hide from their emotions, to fill a void they feel inside, and to cope with daily stresses and problems in their lives.

### Binge Eating Disorder

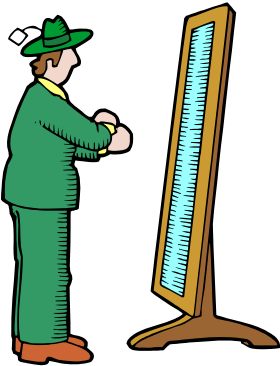
- Binge eating disorder is a combination of symptoms similar to those suffering from compulsive overeating and bulimia. Unlike bulimia, people do not purge following a binge episode.

It is important to remember that people suffering from eating disorders often have low self-esteem. For people suffering from eating disorders and those who love them, it is important to educate yourself and be aware of the resources available.

One resource is [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)

*Next week we will talk about preventing eating disorders and what you can do yourself to eat nutritionally*

Solutions Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is also available as a resource to help assess someone with an eating disorder or a family member who is concerned about someone with an eating disorder and refer him or her to the appropriate treatment.



In this next section we will talk about preventing eating disorders and how you can obtain information to eat nutritionally.

By reading this, you are doing the most important thing in prevention, which is educating yourself and family. One of the errors that people make is thinking that they or their loved ones could not suffer from this. Unfortunately this is not true.

People with eating disorders are often viewed by others as compassionate, warm, giving, sensitive and intelligent people. The problem is that each person suffering cannot see in themselves the beauty that others do. Their own hate from within distorts their perception of how truly wonderful they really are.

It is important to know that eating disorders frequently appear during adolescence or young adulthood, but some reports indicate that they can develop during childhood or later in adulthood. So beware that anyone, at any age, can suffer from eating disorders.

Though women and girls are much more likely than males to develop an eating disorder, boys and men also suffer (estimated 5-15% of patients with anorexia or bulimia and an estimated 35% of those with binge-eating disorder). Boys with eating disorders exhibit the same types of physical and behavioral signs and symptoms as girls, but are less likely to be diagnosed. So you need to be alert to the males in your life as well as yourself if you are male.

As stated before, the one trait that is obviously apparent in all suffers of an eating disorder is their low self-esteem. Often they feel as though they are not good enough.

It is important to communicate to your loved ones and children their value. If you yourself suffer from low self-esteem and issues with food, seek out help before it worsens. You deserve this for yourself. There is not one single thing that causes a person to develop an eating disorder. It usually lies in some

combination of the social, environment, and biological attributes, and/or the family dysfunction of each individual.



One thing parents need to do is to stop focusing on food if they feel there is an issue with food with their child. This can make the child feel even more out of control since food is seen as their last area of life and their body that they can control. Parents need to ask their children about their feelings. Food is superficially central to eating disorders, but there are many complicated issues below the surface. If you are interested in learning more about what people struggling with eating disorders say may have prevented the disorder, go to the web site <http://www.something-fishy.com> (under prevention)

Equating food with emotion is a mistake. Often parents use food as a reward, or as comfort or as a punishment. Communication is crucial so that children or teens or anyone at any age can open up with what they are really feeling, not with what they think people want to hear.

When talking about eating, do not focus on losing weight or looking better, but more about what is healthy to eat and will keep a person strong and healthy. There are many resources about nutritional eating. One of the many good ones is <http://www.thenutritionsource.org> maintained by the Harvard School of Public Health.

Remember eating disorders can be prevented and treated.

**Solutions Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**  
is available as a resource to help assess an individual or a family member who is concerned about an eating disorder and refer him or her to the appropriate treatment. Call 800-526-3485 for free confidential assistance.