

Disordered eating

- Eating for reasons other than nourishment or hunger
- Eating to deal with stress or difficult emotions
- Engaging in calorie restriction, bingeing, or purging irregularly or on a limited basis
- Avoiding major food groups
- Only eating certain foods
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Disordered eating involves behaviors that limit choices, restrict food intake, lead to discomfort, cause a sense of being out of control, or create negative emotions such as shame or guilt.

The term refers to a type of abnormal eating behavior that occurs on a regular basis and has the potential to become dangerous.

Symptoms

- Avoiding certain food groups
- Binge eating
- Calorie restriction or extreme dieting
- Changes in weight
- Eating due to boredom
- Eating as a way to cope with stress
- Eating to deal with emotions
- Elaborate rituals related to food and eating
- Eating the same things every day
- Engaging in limited or irregular bingeing and purging
- Feeling guilty for eating or eating certain foods
- Labeling foods as "good" or "bad"
- Misusing diuretics, laxatives, or enemas
- Only eating certain foods
- Self-inducing vomiting
- Skipping meals
- Taking an all-or-nothing approach to healthy eating
- Using diet pills or supplements to lose weight

Types of Disordered Eating

Disordered eating can include behaviors that are abnormal as well as those that are very similar to those of eating disorders. Disordered eating patterns can include the use of:²

- Diet pills
- Emotional eating
- Excessive exercise
- Fad diets
- Laxative abuse
- Misusing supplements
- Overeating
- Skipping meals or fasting
- Social withdrawal

Research indicates that dieting can contribute to disordered eating, which can then cause an eating disorder.

Emotional eating can be a common type of disordered eating. When people experience negative or challenging emotions, they may turn to pleasurable activities, such as eating, to boost their mood and avoid painful feelings.

Causes

- Culture and society, including celebrity culture, television and movies, social media, and online influencers, can lead to distorted body image and unhealthy relationships with food.
- Mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, or obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) may contribute to the onset of disordered eating behaviors.
- Stress or difficult life changes can trigger the onset of disordered eating patterns, such as loss of appetite or eating for comfort.
- Trauma can make people more vulnerable to disordered eating and eating disorders.

Eating disorders

An eating disorder is a complex condition characterized by abnormal eating habits that impair health and an individual's ability to function.

Anorexia Nervosa

Anorexia nervosa is a type of eating disorder that is characterized by an intense fear of gaining weight, severe restriction of food intake, and a distorted body

image. People with anorexia nervosa often see themselves as overweight, even when they are severely underweight.

Symptoms of anorexia include:

- Intense fear of gaining weight
- Severe restriction of food intake
- Distorted body image
- Excessive exercise
- Extreme weight loss
- Preoccupation with food and weight

Binge Eating Disorder

- Binge eating disorder is characterized by episodes of binge eating followed by feelings of shame, guilt, and distress. People with binge eating disorder often consume large amounts of food even when they are not hungry and feel that they cannot control their eating.

Symptoms of binge eating disorder include:

- Eating large quantities of food in a short period
- Feeling out of control during a binge
- Eating even when you are not hungry
- Feeling guilty, ashamed, or distressed after eating

Bulimia Nervosa

Bulimia nervosa is characterized by episodes of binge eating followed by purging behaviors, such as vomiting or using laxatives. Like anorexia, bulimia nervosa involves distorted body image and a fear of weight gain.

To be diagnosed with bulimia, a person must engage in the following behaviors

- Binging (which involves consuming excessive amounts of food over the course of a two-hour period) and a sense of feeling out of control
- The repeated use of compensatory, self-induced purging behaviors such as the use of laxatives, diuretics, vomiting, and extreme exercise to avoid potential weight gain

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