

Eating Disorders (Part one)

Introduction to Eating Disorders

“[Eating disorders are] present when a person experiences severe disturbances in eating behavior, such as extreme reduction of food intake or extreme overeating, or feelings of extreme distress or concern about body weight or shape” ([NIMH](#)). The three most common types of eating disorders include: anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder.

Although eating disorders affect both females and males, research shows that over 90 percent of people affected by eating disorders are women between the ages of 12 and 25 ([SAMHSA](#)). Approximately 10 million females and 1 million males are battling with anorexia or bulimia and millions more are battling with binge-eating disorder ([NEDA](#)). Binge-eating disorder affects as many males as females ([MayoClinic](#)).

Anorexia Nervosa

According to National Eating Disorder Association “Anorexia nervosa is a serious, potentially life-threatening eating disorder characterized by self-starvation and excessive weight loss” ([NEDA](#)). A person suffering from anorexia nervosa may avoid food and meals, eat food in small amounts, weigh their food, and continuously count their calorie intake ([SAMHSA](#)).

Signs & Symptoms

Sometimes anorexia nervosa can be hard to distinguish since people suffering may have learned to hide their condition. Most importantly dramatic weight loss and a preoccupation with food and weight is the number one sign to anorexia nervosa. Other signs and symptoms include refusing to eat certain foods, anxiety about gaining weight, denial of being hungry, constantly feeling overweight, making up excuses to skip meals, and avoiding friends and daily activities ([NEDA](#)).

Health Consequences

Anorexia nervosa can lead to heart failure, brain damage, osteoporosis, among many other health conditions. Starvation can slow down heart rates and lower blood pressure which raises the risk of heart failure. When the body tries to stay warm, because of the decrease in blood pressure, it will grow a layer of soft hair called lanugo. Anorexia also may cause dry hair and skin, as well as brittle nails. More severe cases of anorexia can cause osteoporosis, which consists of brittle bones because of a loss of calcium. Most commonly, anorexia causes mild anemia, severe dehydration, fainting, fatigue, reduced muscle mass, swollen joints, and feelings of light-headedness and weakness ([SAMHSA](#)) ([NEDA](#)).



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