

About Eating Disorders

Eating patterns of people with eating problems can cause serious medical complications. Anorexia nervosa and bulimia are two serious eating disorders which frequently affect college students. Early recognition and referral for treatment will improve chances for full recovery.

Anorexia nervosa is a pattern of self-imposed starvation. It can be recognized by the following behavioral, emotional and physical symptoms:

Behavioral

- Unusual eating habits -- preoccupation with food and dieting
- Excessive physical activity -- with the goal of burning calories
- Withdrawal from friends and family because of focus on weight loss
- Overuse of laxatives to lose weight

Emotional

- Lack of self-esteem, depression, thoughts about suicide
- Denial of an underweight condition and the desire to still lose more weight

Physical

- Extreme weight loss
- Absence of menstruation
- Cavities and gum disease
- Extreme sensitivity to cold
- Hair, nail, and skin problems

What causes anorexia nervosa? The causes may be psychological, biological or social. One thing that all experts agree on is that food itself is not the cause. Early detection and treatment are necessary to prevent permanent damage to the heart, reproductive organs, and other internal organs.

Bulimia is an eating disorder characterized by binge eating and self-induced vomiting. Some of the same symptoms are present as with anorexia. Some people with anorexia later add symptoms of bulimia as an alternative way of controlling weight.

If you or someone you care about suffers any of the above symptoms and you would like more information, come in and speak with a professional counselor in 1303 James Hall (0203J after October '04).

All services are free and confidential.

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