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## Having eating disorders



People with eating disorders become so

focused on eating or not eating that they really hurt their bodies. People with eating disorders also may spend a lot of time thinking about their weight or how their body looks.

Eating disorders can be very dangerous. They even can be deadly.

**Keep reading to learn** about some of the more common eating disorders and ways to get help.

- 🕒 [What is anorexia nervosa?](#)
- 🕒 [What is bulimia nervosa?](#)
- 🕒 [What is binge eating disorder?](#)
- 🕒 [How do I get help for eating disorders?](#)

**What is anorexia nervosa? »**

Anorexia nervosa (say: an-uh-REK-see-uh nur-VOH-suh) , often called anorexia, is a very dangerous eating disorder. In fact, it is more deadly than any other mental health condition.

## **Fast facts**

Eating disorders can start at any age, but they usually start during the teen years. Females are more likely to get eating disorders than males.

Someone with anorexia often thinks about food and limits what she eats very strictly. She may feel like she is getting

control over her life by controlling her eating. But the truth is that the disease is in control.

## **A person with anorexia may have some or all of the following signs:**

- A low body weight for her height
- A strong fear of gaining weight
- Thoughts that she is fat even when she is very thin
- A lot of weight loss
- Excessive exercising, like making exercise more important than many other things
- Being very careful to eat only certain foods and other extreme dieting habits
- Absent or missing menstrual periods (at least three menstrual periods in a row, if she started having periods)
- Unusual physical changes such as hair all over her body and dry, yellow skin

Anorexia can cause a lot of serious problems, including weak bones, infections, seizures, and heart trouble. If you think you or someone you know may have anorexia, talk to an adult you trust.

**Do you exercise a lot?**

Usually, exercising is great. But sometimes girls exercise to control their weight so much that they hurt their bodies. Read

more  
about  
[having a  
strong  
drive to  
exercise](#),  
even when  
you may  
be hurting  
yourself.

### What is bulimia nervosa? »

Bulimia nervosa (say: buh-LEE-mee-uh nur-VOH-suh), usually called bulimia, has two main parts. These are binge eating and purging, which is trying to make up for the binging.

**Binge eating** is eating an unusually large amount of food in a short time. During a binge, a person may eat really fast even though she isn't even hungry. Someone with bulimia usually feels she can't control the binging, and may feel really embarrassed about it.

**Trying to make up for the binging** can take different forms. Some examples include the following:

- Purging, which means trying to get rid of the food. This could include:
  - Making yourself throw up
  - Taking laxatives (pills or liquids that cause a bowel movement)

Exercising a lot ●

- Eating very little or not at all
- Taking pills to urinate (pee) often to lose weight

**Because of these behaviors**, people with bulimia may not be overweight. But they often worry about what they weigh and how their body looks.

Bulimia can cause serious health problems, including damage to your throat, teeth, stomach, and heart. If you

think you or someone you know may have bulimia, talk to an adult you trust.

**What is binge eating disorder? »**

**A person with binge eating disorder eats an unusually large amount of food in a short time** and feels out of control during the binges. For example, the person may eat an entire bag of cookies and a whole pizza in one short sitting.

A binge eater may feel like she can't stop overeating. That's why binge eating disorder is also sometimes called compulsive overeating. Everybody overeats sometimes, but a binge eater does it often, like once a week or more.

People with binge eating disorder also may do the following:

- Eat more quickly than usual during binges
- Eat until they are uncomfortably full

- Eat when they are not at all hungry
- Eat alone because of embarrassment
- Feel disgusted, depressed, or guilty after binging

Binge eaters are often overweight or obese, because they don't do some of the things people with bulimia or anorexia do, like throw up food or diet very strictly. Binge eating can cause a lot of health problems, including conditions that come from gaining too much weight, such as diabetes and heart disease.

## **Eating disorders and suicide**

People with eating disorders are more likely to think

about  
suicide. If  
you or  
someone  
you know  
is thinking  
about  
suicide,  
get help.  
You can  
call the  
suicide  
hotline at  
800-273-  
TALK  
(800-273-  
8255) or  
911 for  
immediate  
help. You  
also can  
read more  
about  
[suicide](#).

**Eating disorders are real medical illnesses.** They can lead to serious problems with your heart and other parts of your body. They even can lead to death.

**Eating disorders are treatable.** Girls with eating disorders can go on to lead full, happy lives.

Treatment for an eating disorder may include [talk therapy](#), [medicine](#), and nutrition counseling. Treatment depends on the type of disorder and the needs of the person who has it.

If you think you have an eating disorder, talk to your doctor or another trusted adult. You also can call or chat with a special [eating disorders helpline](#)  . Sometimes, a person doesn't have an eating disorder, but has unhealthy dieting behaviors that can turn into an eating disorder. If that's you, get help before any

problems get worse. You deserve to feel great!

If you have an eating disorder, you may feel really bad. Don't give up! You can feel better. Check out a message of hope from Demi Lovato.

You also can be a great friend to someone who has an eating disorder.

[Learn how to help.](#)  