

Eating Disorders

Below are criteria and warning signs for eating disorders, as well as a brief eating disorder screen and referrals to well-respected counseling centers for eating disorders.

ANOREXIA

People with anorexia starve themselves to dangerously thin levels, at least 15% below their appropriate weight.

CRITERIA

- Low Weight
- Weight Phobia: intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat, even though underweight.
- Body Image Issues: Believing you are fat when you are not, making your weight the only thing you judge yourself on, denying the medical seriousness of your low weight.
- Loss of menstrual period: For women who have reached puberty, missing at least three menstrual cycles in a row.

WARNING SIGNS

- Loss of menstrual period
- Dieting obsessively when not overweight
- Claiming to feel “fat” when overweight is not a reality
- Preoccupation with food, calories, nutrition, and/or cooking
- Denial of hunger
- Excessive exercising, being overly active
- Frequent weighing
- Strange food-related behaviors
- Episodes of binge-eating
- 15% or more below normal body weight/rapid weight loss
- Slowness of thought/memory difficulties
- Hair loss
- Anxiety
- Depression

BULIMIA

People with bulimia binge uncontrollably on large amounts of food – sometimes thousands of calories at a time – and then purge the calories out of their bodies through vomiting, starving, excessive exercise, laxatives, or other methods.

CRITERIA

- Binge-Eating on a regular basis
- Purging: Regular efforts to avoid weight gain, including: self-induced vomiting, laxatives, diuretics, enemas, other medications, fasting or excessive exercise.
- Frequency: The binge eating and purging both occur, on average, at least twice a week for three months.
- Body Image Issues: Making your weight the only thing you judge yourself on.

WARNING SIGNS

- Excessive thoughts about weight
- Strict dieting followed by eating binges
- Frequent overeating, especially when distressed
- Bingeing on high calorie, sweet foods
- Use of laxatives, diuretics, strict dieting, vigorous exercise, and/or vomiting to control weight
- Leaving for the bathroom after meals
- Being secretive about binges or vomiting
- Planning binges or opportunities to binge
- Feeling out of control
- Anxiety
- Depression

OTHER EATING DISORDERS

People with Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (EDNOS) have some but not all of the symptoms of anorexia or bulimia.

BINGE EATING DISORDER (COMPULSIVE OVEREATING)

People with binge eating disorder binge uncontrollably on large amounts of food—sometimes thousands of calories at a time—but do not purge the calories after they are consumed.

CRITERIA

- Binge-Eating: on a regular basis
- Strange Eating Patterns: eating rapidly, when not hungry, when alone, and/or till uncomfortably full
- Self-Hatred: feeling distress, disgust, guilt and/or depression about the binges

WARNING SIGNS

- Frequent overeating, especially when distressed
- Bingeing on high calorie, sweet foods
- Being secretive about binges, eating alone
- Feeling out of control when eating
- Depression and guilt

OBESITY

Obesity indicates that a person has more body fat than is healthy. With too much body fat, the risk of certain health problems may increase, such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, stroke, and sleep apnea. Some people who are obese dislike their bodies and experience prejudice or mistreatment by others because of their weight. Obesity is usually a long-term disease with a strong genetic basis, running in families. It is also influenced by culture, environment, personal behavior, the use of certain medications, and medical problems.

CRITERIA

Body Mass Index (BMI), which measures weight in relation to height, is the best measure of obesity. BMI of 30 or more in adults indicates obesity. BMI between 25 and 30 in adults indicates overweight.

WARNING SIGNS

- BMI of 30 or higher, with BMI of 25 or higher raising concerns
- History or repeated dieting and regaining of weight
- Continued weight increases over long periods of time
- Family history of obesity
- Waist-to-hip ratio indicating fat distribution that increases risk of health problems
- Blood test results indicating obesity-related medical concerns, such as elevated cholesterol or triglycerides

A BRIEF EATING DISORDER SCREEN

This eating disorder screen can assist you in determining if you may have a problem.

1. Do you make yourself sick because you feel uncomfortably full?
2. Do you worry you have lost control over how much you eat?
3. Have you recently lost more than 15lbs. in a 3-month period?
4. Do you believe yourself to be fat when others say you are too thin?
5. Would you say that food dominates your life?

UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS

If you or someone you know is possibly suffering from an eating disorder, please call one of the recommended counseling centers below. To find a counselor in your area who treats eating disorders, use the counseling referral list below or on our Help page.

COUNSELING RESOURCES

- **Mercy Ministries** exists to transform the lives of girls struggling with life-controlling issues by providing free residential care and life skills training through biblical counseling

in a loving environment. For more information, visit their website at <https://mercymultiplied.com>

- To find a state-licensed or certified Christian counselor in your area or to find out about other treatment facilities and organizations that offer help for eating disorders, please visit the **American Association of Christian Counselors** website at www.aacc.net.