

Eating Disorder

(Anorexia, Bulimia, Binge Eating, Pica, Rumination, Avoidant)

Most **eating disorders** involve an obsession with food, either related to body shape or independent of body shape. This obsession may lead to restriction of food intake, food binging and overeating, or purging behaviours to compensate for intake such as vomiting or over exercising. Eating disorders also may include eating non-food objects.

Signs and Symptoms

An obsession with food. This obsession may lead to restriction of food, food binging, or purging behaviours such as vomiting or over-exercising. Obsession over body shape can also be a sign. Signs of an eating disorder may include:

- Very restricted eating patterns (Several)
- Fear of gaining weight or behaviours to avoid gaining weight (Anorexia)
- Distorted body image, denial of being underweight or overweight (Anorexia, Bulimia)
- Episodes of binge eating followed by purging behaviours (Bulimia) (vomiting, over-exercising)
- Lack of control when eating (Binge eating)
- Feelings of shame, disgust, or guilt (Binge eating)
- Eating things that are not considered food (Pica)
- Regurgitate food and spit out (Rumination)
- Distaste for certain smells, tastes, colors, textures, temperatures

Common Causes

Genetics and personality traits such as neuroticism, perfectionism, and impulsivity are linked to higher risk of developing an eating disorder. Other potential causes include cultural factors or pressures to be thin. Focusing on losing weight, gaining weight, or achieving certain body compositions can contribute to development of an eating disorder. Brain chemistry, such as levels of serotonin and dopamine may be factors in eating disorder development.



Treatment

The primary treatment for an eating disorder involves getting in touch with your healthcare professional and obtaining a referral to a program designed to treat the diagnosed eating disorder.

Treatment, however, may also include:

- Individual counselling
- Family-based therapy
- Medications
- Hospitalization (if necessary)

The goal is to feel better psychologically and physically, with normalized eating habits.

Self - Assessment

Before getting assistance for yourself or someone you know, get the facts, be patient, offer support, don't judge, and connect with a medical professional. See the following link for a very brief screening tool and more information and resources on eating disorders.

<https://www.ementalhealth.ca/index.php?m=headingScreeningTools&ID=36>

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS NOT A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL