



I Think My Loved One Has an Eating Disorder

Eating disorders often go untreated because friends, family and partners don't have the confidence to confront the individual. They often have a feeling that something is wrong, but they aren't yet sure that the situation warrants outside help.

Following are some signs and symptoms of anorexia and bulimia. Men and women alike can suffer from eating disorders, but the majority of sufferers are females age 18-24. If you recognize any of these signs, it may be time to speak to a professional therapist who specializes in treating eating disorders.

What you might observe:

1. Dramatic weight loss is a relatively short period of time. Drawn appearance in the face and rapid loss of breast tissue
2. Baggy clothes or dressing in layers (hides body shape/weight loss and keeps you warm when there's too little body fat)
3. Unusual behaviors at the table:
 - Shifting the food around on the plate so it looks like the food has been eaten
 - Cutting food into tiny pieces
 - Making sure the fork avoids contact with the lips (using teeth to scrap food off the fork or spoon)
 - Chewing food and spitting it out, but no swallowing
 - Dropping food into a napkin on lap to later throw away or feeding cat or dog
 - Frequent trips to the bathroom immediately following meals. You may hear water running in the bathroom for a long period of time to hide the sound of vomiting
 - Hair loss
4. Excessive exercise, particularly running or cardio machines or classes
5. Exercising at odd times, still exercising when sick or injured
6. Pale or "grey" appearance to the skin
7. Thin nails with peeling layers
8. "Chipmunk cheeks" appearance (swollen glands from frequent vomiting)
9. Bruised or calluses knuckles; bloodshot or bleeding in the eyes; light bruising under the eyes and on the cheeks
10. No longer buys/uses feminine hygiene products (Loss menstrual cycle)
11. Increase in mood swings, signs of depression
12. Loss of sexual desire or increase in sexually impulsive behavior (promiscuity)
13. Insomnia. Poor sleeping habits

What you may find:

1. Diet pills, laxatives, ipecac syrup or enemas in bathroom or room
2. Food in strange places like closets, cabinets, suitcases, basement—she/he doesn't want you to find it in the trash (anorexic), or she's stashing her binge food (bulimic)
3. A "food diary" or lists of foods eaten
4. Internet browser favorites or history list showing weight loss sites and/or pro eating disorder sites
5. Books about weight loss and eating disorders
6. Hidden sweaty workout clothes from gym visits you didn't know about

What you may hear:

1. Always talking about weight and complaining about being fat or being terrified of becoming fat
2. Obsession with calories, carbohydrate and fat content in foods
3. Self-deprecating comments about how stupid and fat she/he is. Demeaning self-labels like “pig” and “disgusting”
4. Always says she/he “just ate” or has plans to eat wherever she is going next. Often cooks elaborate meals for family and friends
5. Complains of constipation or diarrhea (starvation, laxative and diuretic use upsets normal digestion)
6. Unusual focus on acceptance and approval from others
7. Never satisfied that she’s/he’s done something “right”—perfectionist tendencies