

Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are disturbances in eating behaviors that interfere with life functioning. **Anorexia** involves intentional avoidance of eating which leads to the person being unhealthily underweight, while **bulimia** is characterized by periods of binge eating and purging (through exercise, vomiting, or other means), and **binge-eating disorder** consists of binge eating without purging.

Myth: Eating disorders are a lifestyle choice.

Fact: Eating disorders are serious and often fatal illnesses.

Myth: Eating disorders only affect young women.

Fact: They can affect people of all ages, racial/ethnic backgrounds, genders, and body weights.

Risk Factors:

- Prior mental health struggles
- Family history of eating disorders
- Age of the child, life transitions, and extracurricular activities
- Prevalence of dieting behaviors
- Psychological health

Warning Signs:

- Preoccupation with food, weight, or body shape
- An intense fear of gaining weight
- Distorted body image
- Eating alone or in secret to avoid embarrassment

Symptoms:

- Brittle nails and hair
- Feeling tired or sleepy most of the time
- Chronically inflamed or sore throat
- A drop in body temperature, leaving the person feeling cold all the time
- Muscle wasting and weakness

Treatment Options:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): works to identify distorted or unhelpful thinking patterns to change inaccurate beliefs
- Treatment plans can include individual, group, or family therapy, medications, medical care, and nutritional counseling