 

timely techniques to help your child get through the school year

Eating Disorders

Eating Disorders Defined: “An eating disorder is an illness that causes serious disturbances to your everyday diet, such as eating extremely small amounts of food or severely overeating. A person with an eating disorder may have started out just eating smaller or larger amounts of food, but at some point, the urge to eat less or more spiraled out of control. Severe distress or concern about body weight or shape may also characterize an eating disorder. Eating disorders frequently appear during the teen years or young adulthood but may also develop during childhood or later in life. Common eating disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder.” (National Institute of Mental Health)

Statistics: (Defined as Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa and Binge-Eating Disorder)

* Lifetime prevalence for 13 – 18 year olds is 2.7%
  + Prevalence increases the older into the teenage years you go…
    - 2.4% for 13 – 14 year olds
    - 2.8% for 15 – 16 year olds
    - 3.0% for 17 – 18 year olds
* Lifetime prevalence for females is 3.8%
* Lifetime prevalence for males is 1.8%
* Almost 50% of people with eating disorders meet the criteria for Depression
* Only 1 in 10 men and women with eating disorders receive treatment. Only 35% of people that receive treatment for eating disorders get treatment at a specialized facility for eating disorders
* Up to 24 million people of all ages and genders suffer from an eating disorder (anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorder) in the U.S.
* Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness

Anorexia Nervosa

“Many people with anorexia nervosa see themselves as overweight, even when they are clearly underweight. Eating, food, and weight control become obsessions. People with anorexia nervosa typically weigh themselves repeatedly, portion food carefully, and eat very small quantities of only certain foods. Some people with anorexia nervosa may also engage in binge-eating followed by extreme dieting, excessive exercise, self-induced vomiting, and/or misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or enemas.” (National Institute of Mental Health)

Characteristics:

* Deliberate self-starvation with weight loss
* Intense, persistent fear of gaining weight
* Refusal to eat or highly restrictive eating
* Continuous dieting
* Excessive facial/body hair because of inadequate protein in the diet
* Compulsive exercise
* Abnormal weight loss
* Sensitivity to cold
* Absent or irregular menstruation
* Hair loss

2 Types:

Restricting Type: severely restricting calories, sometimes taking in only a few hundred calories a day or just water.

Binge-Eating/Purging Type: when an individual eats something they feel they should not have eaten and then, with the fear of gaining weight, they may vomit or exercise.

Bulimia Nervosa

“Bulimia nervosa is characterized by recurrent and frequent episodes of eating unusually large amounts of food and feeling a lack of control over these episodes. This binge-eating is followed by behavior that compensates for the overeating such as forced vomiting, excessive use of laxatives or diuretics, fasting, excessive exercise, or a combination of these behaviors.

Unlike anorexia nervosa, people with bulimia nervosa usually maintain what is considered a healthy or normal weight, while some are slightly overweight. But like people with anorexia nervosa, they often fear gaining weight, want desperately to lose weight, and are intensely unhappy with their body size and shape. Usually, bulimic behavior is done secretly because it is often accompanied by feelings of disgust or shame. The binge-eating and purging cycle happens anywhere from several times a week to many times a day.” (National Institute of Mental Health)

Characteristics:

* Preoccupation with food
* Binge eating, usually in secret
* Vomiting after bingeing
* Abuse of laxatives, diuretics, diet pills
* Denial of hunger or drugs to induce vomiting
* Compulsive exercise
* Swollen salivary glands
* Broken blood vessels in the eyes

Binge Eating Disorder

“With binge-eating disorder a person loses control over his or her eating. Unlike bulimia nervosa, periods of binge-eating are not followed by purging, excessive exercise, or fasting. As a result, people with binge-eating disorder often are over-weight or obese. People with binge-eating disorder who are obese are at higher risk for developing cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure. They also experience guilt, shame, and distress about their binge-eating, which can lead to more binge-eating.” (National Institute of Mental Health)

Characteristics: (That will be included in the DSM V, due out in 2013)

* Loss of control over amount of eating
* Marked distress over binge episode
* Occurs at least 1x per week for 3 months

And, THREE or more of the following:

* Eating more rapidly than normal (i.e. 2 hr period)
* Eating until feeling uncomfortably full
* Eating large amounts of food when not feeling physically hungry
* Eating alone because of being embarrassed by how much one is eating
* Feeling disgusted with oneself, depressed or very guilty over after overeating

Treatment

Treatment is dependent on the individual and the disorder itself, but several factors hold true regardless of the type of eating disorder with which a person has been diagnosed.

“Adequate nutrition, reducing excessive exercise, and stopping purging behaviors are the foundations of treatment. Specific forms of psychotherapy, or talk therapy, and medication are effective for many eating disorders. However, in more chronic cases, specific treatments have not yet been identified. Treatment plans often are tailored to individual needs and may include one or more of the following:

* Individual, group, and/or family psychotherapy
  + Maudsley approach: parents of adolescents with anorexia nervosa assume responsibility for feeding their child; appears to be very effective in helping people gain weight and improve eating habits and mood in case studies and clinical trials
  + Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has been helpful in treating Bulimia and Binge Eating Disorder
* Medical care and monitoring
  + Combined with psychotherapy has been shown to be effective
* Nutritional counseling
* Medications
  + Some research suggests that the use of medications, such as antidepressants, antipsychotics, or mood stabilizers, may be modestly effective in treating patients with anorexia nervosa. These medications may help resolve mood and anxiety symptoms that often occur along with anorexia nervosa. It is not clear whether antidepressants can prevent some weight-restored patients with anorexia nervosa from relapsing. Although research is still ongoing, no medication yet has shown to be effective in helping someone gain weight to reach a normal level.

Resources…

Websites 🡪

National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders: a nonprofit dedicated to the prevention and alleviation of eating disorders since 1976.

Website: [www.anad.org](http://www.anad.org)

National Eating Disorders Association: a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting individuals and families affected by eating disorders. We campaign for prevention, improved access to quality treatment, and increased research funding to better understand and treat eating disorders. We work with partners and volunteers to develop programs and tools to help everyone who seeks assistance.

Website: [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)

National Institute of Mental Health: The mission of NIMH is to transform the understanding and treatment of mental illnesses through basic and clinical research, paving the way for prevention, recovery, and cure.

Website: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

Books For Kids 🡪

Miller, E. (2008). *The monster health book: A guide to eating healthy, being active and feeling great for monsters and kids.* Holiday House: NY.

Rabe, T. (2001). *Oh the things you can do that are good for you! All about staying healthy.* Random House: NY.

Rockwell, L. (2009). *Good enough to eat: A kids’ guide to food and nutrition.* HarperCollins: NY.

Books For Teens 🡪

Nelson, T. (2008). *What’s eating you? A workbook for teens with anorexia, bulimia and other eating disorders.* New Harbinger: CA.

Books For Parents 🡪

Alexander, J. & Le Grange, D. (2010). *My kid is back*: *Empowering parents to beat anorexia nervosa.* Routledge: UK.

Brown, H. (2010). *Brave girl eating.* HarperCollins: NY.

Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2005). *I’m, like, so FAT! Helping your teen make healthy choices about eating and exercising in a weight-loss world.* Guilford Press: NY.

Some information for this article was taken from:

National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders website: [www.anad.org](http://www.anad.org) accessed by the School Psychologist on June 26, 2012.

National Institute of Mental Health website: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov) accessed by the School Psychologist on June 26, 2012.