

Dealing with Eating Disorders

Are you concerned about having an eating disorder?



What is an eating disorder?

Anorexia, bulimia, and binge-eating disorder (or compulsive overeating) comprise the three most widely known eating disorders. They are often an attempt, when established as a chronic pattern, to alleviate loneliness, anxiety, and anger.

Symptoms of Eating Disorders

Symptoms of Anorexia - calorie restriction, self-starvation, refusal to maintain body weight which is appropriate for height, intense fear of gaining weight or getting "fat", compulsive exercising.

- Anorexia is associated with depression, anxiety, isolation, guilt, shame, irritability, and alcohol/substance abuse.
- Anorexia can lead to lack of menstrual cycle, constipation, abnormal hair growth, lowered heart and breathing rates. It can be life-threatening.

Symptoms of Bulimia - binge-eating (consuming a large amount of food in a short period of time) followed by self-induced vomiting and/or laxative and diuretic abuse, intense fear of gaining weight or getting "fat", frequent dieting, compulsive exercising.

- Bulimia is associated with depression, anxiety, guilt, shame, irritability, and alcohol/substance abuse.
- Bulimia can lead to swelling around neck and throat, erosion of dental enamel, abdominal pain, throat hernia, heart and kidney disorders. It can be life-threatening.

Symptoms of Binge-eating disorder (or compulsive overeating) - binge-eating (consuming a large amount of food in a short period of time) with no subsequent purging, but periodic fasts and dieting.

- Binge-eating disorder is associated with depression, anxiety, guilt, shame, anxiety, irritability/passivity, and alcohol/substance abuse.
- Binge-eating disorder can lead to body weight significantly above average, chronic neck and joint pain, gallbladder disease, limited range of motion, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

What can I do about an eating disorder?

1. **Know that you need help.** If you or anyone you know has symptoms of an eating disorder, it is important to get professional help. Eating disorders are severe emotional and physical problems that affect males and females of all ages. If untreated, an eating disorder can be life-threatening.
2. **Get treatment.** Yes, treatment can be successful. Successful treatment combines many different approaches. Medical attention and hospitalization, nutritional consultations, individual and group psychotherapy, family therapy, and support groups are several different approaches used depending upon the type and severity of the disorder.
3. **Contact the Renfrew Center**, located near Philadelphia, for a screening and consultation. 1-800-RENFREW or <http://www.renfrewcenter.com>.
The Renfrew Center is the country's first residential eating disorder treatment facility. They offer inpatient (residential) therapy, outpatient therapy, and support groups.
4. **Check out the following resources:**
 - National Eating Disorders Association – www.nationaleatingdisorders.org
 - National Association of Anorexia Nervosa & Associated Disorders – www.anad.org
 - Eating Disorders Anonymous support group – www.eatingdisordersanonymous.org
 - Overeaters Anonymous support group – www.oa.org
 - Life Without Ed (book by Jenni Schaefer) – www.jennischaefer.com

To talk with a Bucks Counselor, call 215.968.8189 or email counseling@bucks.edu to schedule an appointment.

It's **FREE** and confidential.