

# NUTRIFAX<sup>©</sup>

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## Eating Disorders

**E**ating disorders are extreme expressions of a range of weight and food issues. They include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and compulsive overeating. All are serious problems that can have life threatening consequences. Mood swings, depression and anxiety are common.

Eating disorders often develop as a way to deal with conflicts, feelings of inadequacy, and other struggles of life. Our culture, with its unrelenting idealization of the so-called “perfect body” is also a contributing factor.

The most common times for the onset of eating disorders are ages 12-17 but can occur much earlier. While women are more likely to have eating disorders, men are also at risk for developing these problems. **Parents are role models and if they are possessed with dieting and thinness or have an eating disorder their children are likely to mimic these behaviors.**

### COMPULSIVE OVEREATING

Compulsive overeating is characterized by periods of impulsive gorging or continuous eating. While there is no purging, there may be sporadic fasts or repetitive diets. Body weight may vary from normal to mild, moderate, or severe obesity.

#### Warning Signs:

- Binge eating
- Night eating
- Frequent weight fluctuations
- Feeling out of control
- Feeling guilty or ashamed about eating
- Depression
- Inability to voluntarily stop eating
- Excessive concern about weight
- Overeating due to stress
- Maintenance of a higher than average weight

### BULIMIA NERVOSA

Bulimia is the repeated cycle of out of control eating followed by purging. The purging may be accomplished by self-induced vomiting, excessive use of laxatives or diuretics, over-exercise, or severe restrictions of further food intake.

#### Warning Signs:

- Binge eating
- Feeling out of control during a binge
- Purging after a binge
- Extreme concern about weight
- Frequent fluctuations in weight
- Frequent dieting
- Inability to voluntarily stop eating
- Feeling guilty or ashamed about eating
- Overeating in reaction to emotional stress

Some people experience both anorexic and bulimic symptoms. Bulimics often “starve” themselves before a binge. Anorexics may purge after consuming a small amount of food.

### ANOREXIA NERVOSA

Anorexia is self-imposed starvation and excessive weight loss. Although people with anorexia are obsessed with food, they deny their hunger.

#### Warning Signs:

- Loss of 15% or more of ideal body weight
- Distorted body image
- Preoccupation with food, calories, nutrition, and/or cooking
- Denial of hunger
- Excessive exercising
- Frequently weigh oneself
- Hair Loss
- Intolerance to cold temperatures
- Loss of menstruation for three consecutive menstrual cycles
- Intense fear of gaining weight even though underweight

**Food and Nutrition Services can assist in providing nutrition information.  
Call 703-813-4800 and ask for a Registered Dietitian.**