

# Disordered Eating



Disordered eating often results in an eating disorder. Disordered eating may be subtle (e.g., losing weight for special occasions, fasting during the day before a “big dinner,” following a “clean” diet, and/or avoiding certain foods).

Addressing these behaviors early on can reset thinking and prevent the onset of clinical eating disorders.

## EATING DISORDERS / DISORDERED EATING

Eating disorders are health conditions that affect both your physical and mental health. These conditions can include inconsistencies in how you think about food, eating, weight, and shape. People with eating disorders can have all different body types and sizes. Per US Navy data, the following are the most common eating disorders: anorexia, bulimia, binge eating, other specified, and unspecified conditions.

## REVIEW OF COMMON EATING DISORDERS

	ANOREXIA	BULIMIA	BINGE EATING
<b>POTENTIAL PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Low body weight</li> <li>+ Extreme weight loss</li> <li>+ Decrease in body temperature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Low, average or above average weight</li> <li>+ Menstrual irregularity</li> <li>+ Abdominal pain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Frequently average or above average weight</li> <li>+ Obesity-related health conditions</li> </ul>
<b>BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Reduction in appetite or total aversion to food</li> <li>+ Restriction of food or refusal to eat which leads to low energy levels</li> <li>+ Fear of weight gain</li> <li>+ Distressed by body weight, shape, or image</li> <li>+ Does not recognize seriousness of current weight or shape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Desire to prevent weight gain</li> <li>+ Consumption of large amounts of food in a short period of time followed by feelings of guilt or shame, depression, purging, fasting, or over-exercising</li> <li>+ Binge eating and compensatory behaviors occur weekly for 3+ months</li> <li>+ Self evaluation is unjustifiably influenced by body shape and weight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Recurrent episodes of binge eating not associated with inappropriate compensatory behavior</li> <li>+ Binge-eating episodes associated with:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Eating much more rapidly than normal</li> <li>o Eating until feeling uncomfortably full</li> <li>o Eating large amounts of food when not feeling physically hungry</li> <li>o Eating alone because of feeling embarrassed by how much one is eating</li> <li>o Feeling disgusted with oneself, depressed, or very guilty after overeating</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>SUBTYPES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Restricting</li> <li>+ Binge-eating / purging</li> </ul>		

**What is binge eating?** Eating within a two-hour period an amount of food that is definitively larger than what most individuals would eat in a similar period under similar circumstances AND feeling that one cannot stop eating or control what or how much one is eating.

**What are inappropriate compensatory behaviors?** Inappropriate compensatory behaviors include self-induced vomiting, misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or other medications, fasting, or excessive exercise.

## OTHER EATING DISORDERS

Symptoms can vary depending on the type of eating disorder.

**Avoidant / Restrictive Food Intake Disorder:** Includes instances in which an individual engages in extremely limited eating or not eating certain foods. The individual's eating pattern often doesn't meet minimum daily nutrition needs. This may lead to problems with growth, development, and functioning in daily life. It is common for individuals experiencing this eating disorder to have excessive fears related to gaining weight or body size. Alternatively, they may not be interested in eating or may avoid food with a certain color, texture, taste, or smell.

**Common Signs & Symptoms:**

- Dramatic weight loss
- Limited range of preferred foods that decreases over time
- Fears of choking or vomiting
- Body image disturbance or fear of weight gain

*Source: Mayo Clinic*

**Rumination Disorder:** Includes instances in which an individual regularly regurgitates food (occurs for at least one month). Regurgitated food may be re-chewed, re-swallowed, or spit out. Typically, when regurgitating food, the individual does not appear to be trying, nor do they appear to be stressed, upset, or disgusted.

*Source: Anxiety & Depression Association of America*

**Unspecified Feeding or Eating Disorder:** Includes instances in which an individual displays symptoms characteristic of a feeding and eating disorder that cause impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functions but does not meet the full criteria for any of the disorders in the feeding and eating disorders diagnostic class.

*Source: Anxiety & Depression Association of America*

## WHEN TO SEE A PROVIDER

If you have problems with eating that cause you distress or affect your life or health, or if you think you have an eating disorder, make an appointment with your provider immediately. It can be difficult to manage or overcome an eating disorder by yourself. The earlier you seek treatment, the easier it will be to make a full recovery. Treatment options include counseling/therapy, medications, and nutrition education.

## RESOURCES

*The Body Positive*  
([www.thebodypositive.org](http://www.thebodypositive.org))

*Eating Disorder Resource List*  
([www.eatingrecoverycenter.com/resources/recommended-websites](http://www.eatingrecoverycenter.com/resources/recommended-websites))

*National Eating Disorder Association, NEDA*  
([www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/))

*Eating Disorder Helpline, NEDA*  
*Helpline: Chat, Call or Text NEDA*  
<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/help-support/contact-helpline>

*Fighting Eating Disorders in Underrepresented Populations (FEDUP)*  
(<https://fedupcollective.org/>)

*Eating Disorders Anonymous*  
([www.eatingdisordersanonymous.org](http://www.eatingdisordersanonymous.org))

If you are in a crisis and need help immediately, text "NEDA" to 741741 to connect with a trained volunteer at [Crisis Text Line](#). Crisis Text Line provides free, 24/7 support via text message to individuals who are struggling with mental health, including eating disorders, and are experiencing crisis situations.

*Disclaimer: The views expressed in this report reflect the results of research conducted by the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Navy, Department of Defense, nor the U.S. Government.*