

## Anorexia Nervosa

What is it?

A mental health disorder characterised by losing a large amount of weight until the person is considerably underweight. People with anorexia are usually very fearful of putting weight on and will go to extreme lengths with restricting food intake and exercising to maintain a very low weight.

Who does it affect?

Both genders and all ages from primary aged children to the elderly. The most common age and gender to develop anorexia is girls aged 14-18.

Why don't they just eat more?

People with anorexia do not believe they are underweight—they often see a very large person when they look in the mirror. Anorexia is a mental health disorder, not an out of control diet.

What are the health implications?

- ◇ Periods stop
- ◇ Brittle bone
- ◇ Abnormal heart rhythm
- ◇ Hair and teeth fall out
- ◇ Premature death for 20%

## Bulimia Nervosa

What is it?

A mental health disorder characterised by abnormal eating—eating large amounts of food at once (binging) then removing it from the body (purging), most typically by forced vomiting. This behaviour is usually hidden from friends and family and weight is maintained, making it difficult to spot.

Who does it affect?

Both genders and all ages from primary aged children to the elderly. The most common age and gender to develop anorexia is girls under 20.

Vomiting is horrible. Why would anyone want to do that?

As with all eating disorders, people with bulimia generally have very low confidence and self esteem. Sufferers report feeling out of control when bingeing and then the guilt of consuming so much food makes them desperate to get rid of it, whatever it takes.

What are the health implications?

- ◇ Stomach pain
- ◇ Bad breath and rotting teeth
- ◇ Calluses on the backs of the hand
- ◇ Swelling of the hand and feet
- ◇ Heart attacks from electrolyte imbalances

## EDNOS

What is it?

Eating Disorders Not Otherwise Specified. It basically means a person has a mental health problem that considerably affects their eating but they do not fit into the anorexia or bulimia categories. It is no less serious than anorexia or bulimia. Most people who seek help for eating disorders have the EDNOS diagnosis.

Binge eating (generally without purging), restricting food intake but weight loss doesn't cause an extremely low BMI and behaviour flitting between anorexic and bulimic are all EDNOS.

How do you know if someone has EDNOS?

As EDNOS is such a varied diagnosis, everyone's experiences and symptoms vary. Generally the ages affected tend to match the eating disorder the behaviour most closely resembles. Some people will have signs and symptoms closely related to anorexia or bulimia. Binge eating disorder affects males and females in equal amounts and is usually characterised by being overweight/obese.