

Anorexia Nervosa

A serious mental illness where people are of a **low, unhealthy, weight** due to limiting their energy intake. They might also do lots of exercise to get rid of food eaten.

Anorexia causes a person to form a distorted body image of themselves, leading to them thinking that they are overweight even when they are severely underweight. Sufferers experience a deep fear of gaining weight and can go to great lengths to hide their behaviour from family and friends. Sometimes they might not realise that they are ill.

Most common in young women, starting in mid to late teens. Anorexia has the highest risk of death of all mental illnesses.

Signs and symptoms include:

- Weight loss, unusually low BMI
- Lying about weight loss or food eaten
- Strict dieting and/or missing meals
- Physical weakness, feeling lightheaded/dizzy
- Tiredness, feeling cold, low blood pressure
- Stopping of periods (in women)
- Fine hair growing over the body

Bulimia

Characterised by **cycles** where someone eats a lot of food in a short amount of time (**binge eating**) and then makes themselves sick (or uses laxatives, fasting or excessive exercise) to stop themselves from gaining weight (**purging**). Sufferers are critical of their weight/body shape and fear gaining weight.

During a binge, the person does not feel in control of how much or how quickly they're eating and might feel disconnected from what they're doing. Can be difficult to spot as the behaviour is usually secretive and might not involve changes in weight.

Most common in young women, starting in late teens.

Signs and symptoms include:

- Out of control eating of large amounts of food
- Disappearing soon after eating to purge
- Feeling guilty/ashamed, behaving secretly
- Fear of putting on weight
- Mood swings, tiredness
- Sore throat, damage to teeth from vomiting
- Skin problems, calluses on hands
- Stomach problems

Binge Eating Disorder

Binge eating disorder involves the regular eating of large portions of food in a short time in an out of control way. Sufferers eat until feeling uncomfortably full and then feel guilt and disgust. They find it difficult to stop during a binge even if they want to.

Binge eating can be planned or spontaneous and usually takes place in private, though the person may also eat regular meals outside their binges.

Most common in those in their late teens or early 20s, both men and women.

Signs and symptoms:

- Eating a lot of food very fast
- Eating until uncomfortably full
- Eating when not hungry or in secret
- Buying lots of food, hoarding food
- Hiding how much they are eating
- Putting on weight

OSFED (Other Specified Feeding or Eating Disorder)

Diagnosed when a person's symptoms don't exactly fit with any of the three mentioned eating disorders. Any of the symptoms associated with bulimia, anorexia or binge eating disorder can be part of OSFED.

OSFED accounts for a large percentage of eating disorders and is **just as serious as anorexia, bulimia and binge eating**.

Signs to look out for might include:

- Preoccupation with and/or secretive behaviour around food
- Self-consciousness when eating in front of others
- Low confidence and self-esteem
- Poor body image
- Irritability and mood swings
- Tiredness
- Social withdrawal
- Feelings of shame, guilt, and anxiety
- Difficulty concentrating