

DISORDERED EATING

Facts, Myths & How You Can Help



Nearly 30 million people in the U.S. will meet the criteria for at least one eating disorder in their lifetime. This guide highlights facts and misconceptions about disordered eating, and offers tools to help yourself or someone you know adopt a healthy relationship with food.

WARNING SIGNS

According to the National Eating Disorders Association, these behaviors may be indicators to look out for disordered eating in someone you know.

1. Refusing to eat certain foods/food groups
2. Making excuses to avoid mealtimes.
3. Unusual mood swings.
4. Withdrawing from friends, family and community and isolating self.
5. Complaints of dizziness.
6. Cuts and callouses across the tops of knuckles.
7. Noticeable fluctuation in weight, up or down.
8. Maintaining an excessive, rigid exercise regiment.



DISORDERED EATING FACTS

Common eating disorders

1. Anorexia nervosa: Avoiding food or severely restricting food.
2. Bulimia nervosa: Binging and purging but without limiting what and how much a person eats.
3. Binge eating: Binging without purging or restriction. This is the most common eating disorder in the United States.
4. Avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID): The person limits the amount or type of food they eat, but not because they are worried about their weight.

Effects on the body from eating disorders

1. Feeling full after eating small amounts of food.
2. Feeling cold all the time.
3. Dizziness and blackouts.
4. Loss of strength, high fatigue.
5. Hair loss and dry skin.
6. Decreased hormone levels.
7. Heart muscle mass reduced by 25%.
8. Heart rate and blood pressure decreased.
9. Irregular heartbeat.
10. Stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, constipation, and bloating.

Effects on the mind from eating disorders

1. Poor judgement and decision making.
2. Depression, anxiety, and irritability.
3. Increased rigidity and obsessional thinking.
4. Impaired concentration and comprehension.
5. Withdrawal and isolation.
6. Loss of sense of humor.

DISORDERED EATING MYTHS

Myth:

You are only affecting your muscle and body fat by not eating.



Fact:

Malnutrition effects nearly every organ in the body.

Myth:

Eating disorders are a choice.



Fact:

Eating disorders are a complex combination of medical and mental illnesses that people do not choose.

Myth:

Eating disorders only occur in females.



Fact:

Eating disorders are more common in females, but can affect anyone.

Myth:

Eating disorders are rare.



Fact:

Eating disorders are the third most common chronic illness among adolescents after obesity and asthma.

HEALTHY WAYS TO COPE

Gratitude

Keep a gratitude journal. Look for 3 things to be grateful for every day. Notice what you are grateful for about your body (laughing, hugs, texting, naps, dancing). Spread gratitude around... let others know you're grateful for them!

Grounding

- Practice naming:
1. 5 things you can see.
 2. 4 things you can feel.
 3. 3 things you can hear.
 4. 2 things you can smell.
 5. 1 thing you can taste.

You can even try the above grounding practice, 54321, with your food!

Mindfulness

Try mindful eating. Pay attention to the taste, smell, and feel of food as you eat. You can even try the grounding practice 54321 with your food! Look up mindfulness practices on YouTube. Allow your breathing to slow and notice where you're holding tension in your body.

Indulge in what you enjoy

Spend time with the people you love. Explore creative outlets like singing, dancing, or crafting. Watch your favorite movies and tv shows. Show yourself love by allowing yourself time to do things you really enjoy.



HEALTHY WAYS TO HELP

If someone you know is affected by disordered eating, here are a few ways you can offer support.

- Prioritize meals together, incorporate fun activities throughout, spend time with them in ways that they choose. Listen carefully and allow them time to share.
- Be sure to be present with your loved one and avoid dismissing their experiences. Try to listen, stay calm, and ask open-ended questions.
- Notice your relationship with food and how you talk about your body image. Try to stay away from commenting on how much or little you eat, how you feel about your own body (positive or negative), and commenting on physical attributes of your loved one (positive or negative).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you are in crisis, do not wait. Talk to a safe adult or call the 988 Suicide & Crisis Hotline.

1. For more information on how to help as a caregiver, view the [Easterseals MORC Disordered Eating Integrated Health Pathway: A Guide for Caregivers](#)
2. For more facts, myths and coping skills, view the [Easterseals MORC Disordered Eating Integrated Health Pathway: Facts, Myths, and Coping Skills](#).
3. [NEDA: National Eating Disorder Association](#)
4. [MyPlate](#)
5. [John Hopkins Medicine](#)
6. [Eating Disorders Victoria](#)
7. [Families Empowered and Supporting the Treatment of Eating Disorders](#)



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resources, like this one,
available for the
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