

Anorexia

What is Anorexia?

Anorexia, sometimes referred to as anorexia nervosa, is a psychological eating disorder. Someone who is anorexic could start off on a simple diet but end in an obsession for losing weight. Most commonly, people become anorexic between the ages of 13 and 30. Anorexia is sometimes identified as an obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) because of the addiction and obsession with losing weight.

Who’s at Risk of Anorexia?

Many people who suffer anorexia are of early adolescence. These adolescences may have been a victim of child abuse or are very self-conscious about their body. Of all the people who suffer anorexia, 95% of them are women. Also, Caucasians have been shown to be at higher risk than people of any other racial background. People who have a desire for a certain profession or are in the profession (such as a dancer, a model, or athlete) have a higher chance of going through anorexia to create an ideal body.

Anorexia Symptoms

Symptoms of Anorexia include both behavioral changes and physical changes. Anorexia is a life threatening condition and should be looked after immediately.

Behavioral and psychological changes include:

- Becoming easily upset
- Weak and tired from lack of sleep
- Anxiety
- Exercising often
- Social withdrawal
- Depression
- An over-use of pills or laxatives
- Eating rituals
- Becoming or remaining an over achiever.

Anorexic people will be perfectionists and often have high grades or work intensely on everything. An obsession with food. People who are Anorexic will collect recipes to cook for other people but never eat any of it. Physical changes include:

- Yellowish skin
- Shortness of breath
- A change in menstrual periods; whether they stop completely or are delayed
- Decaying teeth from repetitive vomiting
- Slow heart rate
- Becoming approximately 15% below average weight
- Having a low count of white and red blood cells
- Low body temperatures
- Loss of hair on head
- Bone density and bone loss; this can result in problems later on in life
- A decrease in the rate at which food is absorbed
- A disrupted digestive system caused by starvation and laxatives
- Increased or decreased urination patterns

Causes of Anorexia

Although there is no definite cause, there are a few studies that show what can lead to anorexia. Psychological problems with someone can lead to anorexia. Someone who has a low self-esteem and negative feelings towards themselves are often perfectionists and become anorexic. In addition, the desire to become thin in modern times has risen. Women have a high fear of standards in today’s society because of successful women who are thin which has become the "ideal look". Research also shows that the reason for anorexia could be a dysfunction in the hypothalamus of the brain. The hypothalamus controls metabolic processes.

Anorexia Treatment

There are three steps to be taken in order to treat Anorexia. The person who suffers from Anorexia is in need of medical care, nutritional advice, and counseling.

Medical treatment would include taking the anorexic patient to the hospital. Someone who suffers from anorexia could have damaged organs and may need assistance getting back on track. While at the hospital, they may be fed through a feeding tube. Medications, such as Zyprexa, may be given to help restore natural habits and proper weight gain. Being at the hospital will help re-establish the person to a healthy weight.

Nutritional therapy will correct malnutrition. A nutritionist or dietitian will promote healthy eating and well balanced meals. Weight gain should be 1-3 pounds a week. There should be a large decline in physical activity.

Counseling and therapy can usually identify how the problem began and can prevent it from happening again. Therapy will create a healthy mind and can find the source of the negative thoughts. The psychological treatment can include: individual therapy, group therapy, family therapy, and cognitive behavior therapy. A therapy that has proven to work is Maudsley model family therapy. This method uses the family as part of the solution to help the person suffering anorexia. This method approaches the problem in a healthy way. Counseling and therapy will help them deal with problems that they may face in life.



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