

Does my friend
have an
eating disorder?

Know the signs
of an eating
disorder:

Anorexia Nervosa

A person may:

- Become very thin
- Have dull hair, dry skin and brittle nails
- Develop fine hair on arms, legs, and torso
- Always feel cold or tired
- Exercise vigorously at odd hours
- Have unusual eating rituals (for example, he or she may eat only tiny bites of food)
- Wear baggy clothes to hide his or her body
- Stop menstruating

Binge Eating Disorder

A person may:

- Gain weight rapidly
- Hoard food
- Not stop eating when full
- Eat rapidly and secretively or snack all day long
- Act guilty or disgusted with him or herself after a binge
- Be depressed

Bulimia Nervosa

A person may:

- Gain and lose weight often
- Not have a change in body weight in spite of eating a lot
- Misuse laxatives, diuretics, diet pills, or exercise
- Make excuses to use the bathroom after meals
- Have tooth decay from contact with stomach acid during vomiting
- Have cuts and scrapes on backs of hands from self-induced vomiting
- Have irregular menstrual periods



In the United States, more than 10 million females and 1 million males seek help for an

eating disorder. It is likely that many more cases are never reported.



The average American woman is 5'4" tall and weighs 140 pounds. Most female fashion models are thinner than 98% of American women.



Males also develop eating disorders. 10% of those seeking help are men.



Helping a Friend

If you think a friend may have a problem, there are things you can do to help.

Focus on the positive:

- **Express concern.** Talk about your friend's health and happiness rather than his or her eating behaviors.
- **Be patient and be there.** Listen and care. Point out strengths and praise talents.
- **Encourage your friend to seek professional help.** Offer to go along to the first visit.

Avoid the negative:

- **Don't** give advice (unless asked for it). Don't nag or criticize.
- **Don't** be part of talk that focuses just on food, body size or weight.
- **Don't** take on the responsibility of convincing your friend to change.

How family and friends can help

- **Educate yourself**

- Learn all you can about eating disorders. Read books, magazines, and/ or articles about eating disorders. Talk to a health-care provider.

- **Be honest**

- Let the person know you are worried about his or her health and well being.

- **Be patient**

- Relapses can happen. Don't judge the person. Instead, be supportive.

- **Build self-esteem**

- Promote a positive self-image. Don't focus on appearance or weight.

- **Don't control**

- Avoid trying to force the person to eat or stop exercising. Letting the person control their own behavior shows your respect.

- **Don't blame**

- Blaming yourself or others may stall recovery and increase feelings of guilt or doubt.

Steps to Recovery

An eating disorder can be life-threatening. People who get better usually take these steps:

- **They notice they have a problem** with eating, body image, and/or exercise.
- **They get professional help** from someone trained to treat eating disorders.
- **They learn about eating.** They learn how to nourish their bodies with a wide variety of foods. They learn how much food their bodies really need.
- **They learn about feelings.** They learn how they've used food to cope. They learn other ways to express and deal with their feelings.
- **They learn to accept their bodies.** They learn to value themselves for who they are, not for how they look or what they weigh.

Where to go for HELP

- University Health and Counseling Services

Health Services, 472-1300

Counseling Services, 472-1305

Counselors are available to work with you, with your friend, or with you and your friend together

- National Eating Disorders Association

Information and Referral Line: (800)-931-2237

www.edap.org

- Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc. (ANRED)

www.anred.org

- Overeaters Anonymous

www.overeatersanonymous.org

1-505-891-2664

Why do people develop eating disorders?

Experts aren't certain, but, they have some ideas.

- **Poor self-image**

- Low self-esteem and a negative body image may play roles. Cultural attitudes ('thinner is better') may add to these feelings.

- **Need for control**

- In some cases, a person may develop obsessions with food and body weight to: make up for feelings of helplessness, to get the attention of others, and/ or to rebel against parental control.

- **Need to overachieve**

- Perfectionists and people who always aim to please others may be more prone to developing eating disorders.

- **Stressful personal life**

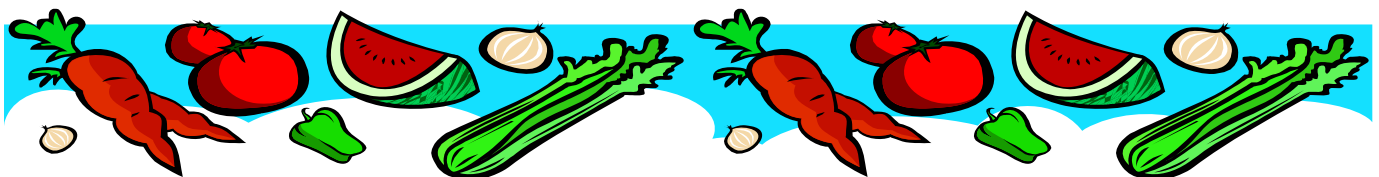
- Death of a loved one, divorce or a breakup of a relationship can trigger eating disorders. School or work stress may also be involved.

- **Difficulty with emotions**

- Food may be a source of comfort to try to lessen feelings of depression, anxiety, despair, or anger.

- **Genetics**

- Some researchers believe eating disorders run in families.





Eating Disorders

are about more than just food.

Disordered eating is often a person's method of coping with or avoiding feelings and events.

The causes and treatment are complex but your genuine concern for and support of your friend can be very helpful.