

Common Symptoms of an Eating Disorder

Below are common symptoms of an eating disorder¹. If you would like to talk to someone you can contact the National Eating Disorder Association for support, resources and treatment options for yourself or a loved one at (800) 931-2237. You can also use a chatline at the NEDA website by going to <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/help-support/contact-helpline>. And, if you are ever in a crisis situation, you can text "NEDA" to 741741 to be connected with a trained volunteer at the Crisis Text Line.

Emotional and behavioral Symptoms

- In general, behaviors and attitudes that indicate that weight loss, dieting, and control of food are becoming primary concerns
- Preoccupation with weight, food, calories, carbohydrates, fat grams, and dieting
- Refusal to eat certain foods, progressing to restrictions against whole categories of food (e.g., no carbohydrates, etc.)
- Appears uncomfortable eating around others
- Food rituals (e.g. eats only a particular food or food group [e.g. condiments], excessive chewing, doesn't allow foods to touch)
- Skipping meals or taking small portions of food at regular meals
- Any new practices with food or fad diets, including cutting out entire food groups (no sugar, no carbs, no dairy, vegetarianism/veganism)
- Withdrawal from usual friends and activities
- Frequent dieting
- Extreme concern with body size and shape
- Frequent checking in the mirror for perceived flaws in appearance
- Extreme mood swings

Physical Symptoms

- Noticeable fluctuations in weight, both up and down
- Stomach cramps, other non-specific gastrointestinal complaints (constipation, acid reflux, etc.)

¹ National Eating Disorder Association

- Menstrual irregularities — missing periods or only having a period while on hormonal contraceptives (this is not considered a “true” period)
- Difficulties concentrating
- Abnormal laboratory findings (anemia, low thyroid and hormone levels, low potassium, low white and red blood cell counts)
- Dizziness, especially upon standing
- Fainting/syncope
- Feeling cold all the time
- Sleep problems
- Cuts and calluses across the top of finger joints (a result of inducing vomiting)
- Dental problems, such as enamel erosion, cavities, and tooth sensitivity
- Dry skin and hair, and brittle nails
- Swelling around area of salivary glands
- Fine hair on body (lanugo)
- Cavities, or discoloration of teeth, from vomiting
- Muscle weakness
- Yellow skin (in context of eating large amounts of carrots)
- Cold, mottled hands and feet or swelling of feet
- Poor wound healing
- Impaired immune functioning