

Eating Disorder: Types, Symptoms, and Treatments

Eating disorder is a common yet misunderstood condition. Stigma and ignorance have prevented many people to seek proper **eating disorder treatment**. Here are things you must know about eating disorder and how to deal with it.

Eating Disorder Definition and Symptoms

Eating disorder is a term that encompasses various disturbances in healthy eating habits, ranging from drastic overeating to extreme food intake reduction. The problems often stem from psychological issues, such as stress, trauma, anxiety, or distorted perception about body weight and shape.

Depending on the type, there are various typical symptoms of an eating disorder, such as:

- Drastic weight loss or weight gain.
- Extreme attention toward diet and calorie-counting.
- Refusing to eat in front of people.
- Constant digestive problems such as stomachache and constipation.
- Corroded teeth, halitosis, and wound on tongue or mouth caused by frequent vomiting.
- Irregular or halted menstruation.
- Denial about having a problem.
- Various psychological signs, such as depressive bouts, emotional fluctuations, and feeling of losing control.

These symptoms may be shared among several eating disorder types, and exact diagnosis must be made by a professional.

Types of Eating Disorder

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) categorizes 5 types of eating disorder, which are:

- Anorexia nervosa.

Anorexia nervosa is characterized by extreme dieting and self-starvation, which results in various physical and metabolic problems.

- Bulimia nervosa.

Bulimia nervosa is a term for alternating episodes between excessive, compulsory eating and purging (vomiting foods).

- Binge eating.

Binge eating is characterized by rapid consumption of foods with a larger amount than most people consider normal. Just like bulimia nervosa, this is usually accompanied by a sense of losing control.

- Other specified eating/feeding disorders.

There are several types of eating/feeding disorders which descriptions do not fit the three previous conditions. This includes atypical anorexia nervosa, pica (desire to eat nonfood materials), orthorexia (an excessive obsession in healthy eating), and night-eating syndrome.

- Unclassified eating disorder.

This category describes eating disorders that cannot be classified to all the previous conditions, but can significantly impact physical, mental, and social conditions.

Someone can be diagnosed with the eating disorder if his/her condition meets several criteria. For example, binge and purge meet bulimia nervosa classification if they happen at least 1-3 times a week, for 3 months.

Eating Disorder Treatments

Eating disorders often root from social and/or psychological factors. Stress, post-traumatic stress disorders, abuse history, social pressure, bullying, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and even personality disorder can contribute to the eating disorder. Genetic factors can also influence it. According to Alliance of Eating Disorders, someone with an anorexic parent is 12 times more prone to develop anorexia.

Aside from medical treatments, every person with the eating disorder needs specific treatment adjusted to his/her condition. Typical treatments for eating disorder include:

- Cognitive therapy.
Cognitive therapy is a structured behavioral therapy form aimed to change unhealthy thinking patterns that result in the disorder.
- Psychotherapy.
The goal of psychotherapy is to resolve any underlying psychological issues that may manifest as eating disorder.
- Nutritional counseling.
Nutritional counseling is not only aimed to form a healthy eating habit, but also change the person's unhealthy approach toward weight loss and proper eating.

Support from spouse, family, or friends is important during the **eating disorder treatment** period. Understanding, compassion, and nonjudgmental attitude are important in successful recuperation.