



Disordered Eating

What is disordered eating?

In spite of the great progress made in recent years in the treatment of various serious diseases, modern society seems to be facing an intractable type of complex mental diseases, that of eating disorders.

Disordered eating is defined by persistent eating behaviors that result in serious harm to physical health, or the manifestation of significant dysfunction in one or more areas of daily life.

It is estimated that millions of people suffer from eating disorders at any given time. Women between the ages of 12 and 35 years old are those who are mainly affected, but there has of lately been an increase in the incidence in both children and males.

Causes of disordered eating

Why do so many women, and, increasingly men, develop eating disorders? Genetic, psychological, environmental, and family factors contribute to the appearance of these disorders. First-degree relatives of anorexic or bulimic patients are themselves more likely to develop a disorder in food intake. Research shows that hormonal and neurobiological factors can contribute to the development of eating disorders. Family structure, personality type, stress, adolescence and socio-cultural factors can be risk indicators. Many of those affected, may also feel overwhelmed with their life or have low-self esteem, and in turn try to control their lives by controlling the exact amount of calories they take and the food they consume.

Different types of eating disorders

The most common forms of eating disorders include:

- o **Anorexia Nervosa**

Anorexia Nervosa is characterized by a pre-occupation with body image and weight, which results in low food absorption and finally in low BMI. As well as restricting the amount of food eaten, patients with anorexia nervosa may exercise, even if sick or injured, to get rid of the calories taken. Some of them may even consume large amount of food at once and then purge, by vomiting or using laxatives.

People who suffer from anorexia nervosa often see themselves differently than other people see them; they have a distorted image of themselves, and think they're fatter than they actually are. Anyone can be affected, however it is most common among professions and careers that promote being thin, such as athletes, dancers and models.





- **Bulimia Nervosa:**

Bulimia Nervosa is also a serious mental illness, described by a cycle of behaviors, which usually begin with episodes of uncontrolled and excessive eating. Typically, a person quickly "devours" large amounts of food, usually rich in calories. As the episode progresses, it often feels like it is impossible to stop eating. Immediately afterwards, he or she is overwhelmed by feelings of guilt and intolerance and starts taking some actions, such as intensive exercise, vomiting and use of drugs, such as diuretics and laxatives, which they usually try to keep secret.

This kind of disorder often creates problematic relationships between the patients and their family and friends, particularly as the sufferers have abnormal eating behaviors and they try to avoid social activities to engage in binge/purge episodes. The main difference from anorexia nervosa is that the individual's weight remains generally within or above the normal range.

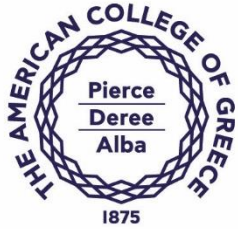
- **Binge Eating Disorder**

Binge Eating Disorder is commonly known by compulsive overeating or consuming abnormal amounts of food (often very quickly and to the point of discomfort) while feeling unable to stop. Binge eating comes without compensatory behavior, so does not fit qualifications of bulimia. However, this disorder is not just about eating large portions of food, nor are people who suffer from it just enjoying themselves by eating. Sufferers often feel extremely distressed, they lose control and they can even feel disconnected from what they are doing, while sometimes they forget what they've eaten afterwards.

This condition often leads to the development of weight gain or obesity, which can indirectly reinforce further compulsive eating. The feeling of guilt or disgust, that often comes with binge eating, can lead people to continue to use food to cope; thus a vicious cycle is created. People suffering usually have a related comorbidity, such as depression or anxiety.

Treatment

Eating disorders can be a life-threatening illness, and treatment should focus on the underlying thoughts and feelings that cause the behavior. It's usually very difficult for people who suffer from disordered eating to help themselves or get better on their own, as they may not even recognize their problem. It is very important they seek help as soon as possible.



Know the Facts

Eating disorders are usually treated with psychotherapy. The form of psychotherapy is always adapted to the needs of the individual and should be offered by an experienced and qualified therapist. Some forms of psychotherapy that are proven to work better are family therapy (Systemic Psychotherapy) and psychotherapy based on cognitive and behavioral principles (Cognitive Behavioral Psychotherapy). Some patients will need medication to treat potentially coexisting conditions, such as depression or anxiety, and should be carefully monitored by a psychiatrist.

However, as we have already mentioned, eating disorders are serious and complex diseases, and a whole therapeutic team is often required for their treatment. This team includes doctors, dieticians, nurses, social workers, etc. In some cases and especially when the BMI is low, or in cases where the person's health is at immediate risk, hospitalization is recommended.

Health



Where to get help on and off campus

- **ACG Counseling Center**

You can find the link for further info below:
<http://www.acg.edu/current-students/student-services/acg-counseling-center>

- **ACG Health & Wellness Center**

Infirmaries: There are two infirmaries on campus, where you can seek help or advise from the nurses.

Wellness Coaching: (<https://www.acg.edu/current-students/student-services/acg-health-wellness/wellness-coaching/>)

- **“Anasa” - Support center for people who suffer from eating disorders**

Call 210-9234904 or visit <https://www.anasa.com.gr/el/> for more information



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Sources: www.eatingdisorderhope.com , www.eating-disorders.org.uk, www.freepik.com.