

Eating Disorders

Anorexia Nervosa

What is anorexia?

Anorexia is one of the most common psychiatric diagnoses in young women and has one of the highest death rates of any mental condition. Though it is more common in early to mid- adolescence, anorexia can appear at any age. Approximately 90- 95% of patients diagnosed with anorexia nervosa are female. Of them, between 5- 20% will die.

Three Primary Symptoms of anorexia nervosa are:

- ▶ Resistance to maintaining body weight at or above the minimally normal weight standard for age and height
- ▶ Intense fear of weight gain or being “fat” even though underweight
- ▶ Loss of period in women post puberty

Warning Signs of Anorexia Nervosa

- ▶ Dramatic weight loss
- ▶ Preoccupied with weight, food, calories, fat grams, and dieting
- ▶ Anxiety about gaining weight or being fat
- ▶ Frequent comments about feeling fat or overweight despite weight loss
- ▶ Denial of hunger and excuses to avoid food or meals
- ▶ Development of food rituals (eating food in certain order, etc.)
- ▶ Refusal to eat certain foods, progressing to restrictions against whole categories of food
- ▶ Excessive, rigid exercise regiments
- ▶ Withdrawal from friends and activities

Health risks of Anorexia Nervosa

- ▶ Slow heart rate and/or high blood pressure which can cause heart failure
- ▶ Osteoporosis
- ▶ Muscle loss
- ▶ Fainting, fatigue, and overall weakness
- ▶ Severe dehydration
- ▶ Dry hair
- ▶ Hair and skin loss

Treatment

Outpatient therapy, day treatment, residential treatments, and transitional living treatments are available, outpatient is most common. Outpatient offers the psychotherapy needed to rebuild the self-confidence, and offers a nutritional plan, group sessions, and therapeutic activities, without having to stay in the facilities throughout treatment.

This information is general. If your doctor tells you something different, follow his or her instructions.

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For more information about women's health issues, stop by our Resource Center at 2000 West First Street, Piedmont Plaza II, 1st Floor, Winston Salem, NC 27104, visit our website at <http://www.wakehealth.edu/WHCOE/> or contact us at (336) 713-4220.