

Anorexia

Anorexia is defined by the Ohio State University Family and Consumer Sciences department as being a devastating eating disorder that, in extreme cases, may lead to self-inflicted starvation. This is an accurate description of anorexia nervosa, but many fail to realize that there is more than one type of anorexia. In fact, there are two.

Anorexia, no matter what the type, is an obsession with food. It is an obsession with eating habits that often arise due to many outside forces causing pressure on young men and women. These individuals are flooded with messages from the media that tell us to eat healthy and exercise on a regular basis, but what happens when you become with eating and losing weight? In extreme cases, anorexia develops. These individuals become irrational about their weight and they deny themselves food. Weight management, fat grams and counting calories become the only thing that matters in life and the danger that exists with it is simply ignored.

Classic anorexia, also known as restricting anorexia or anorexia nervosa, is when the person eats very little and loses weight through excessive exercise and self-starvation. The calories that the person does consume are insufficient to support the body.

Binge-eating or purging anorexia is another type of the disease. This type of anorexia is combined with bulimia. The individual binges on food while cutting calories and then purges the food they just ate. The individual may do this through self-induced vomiting, misusing laxatives, enemas or diuretics. These people often show both signs of anorexia and bulimia. Interestingly, about 50% of anorexics will also develop bulimia.

Several warning signs are associated with anorexia and include:

- Refusal to maintain a minimal normal body weight
- Basing their self-worth on their weight and personal body image
- Eating foods low in fat and calories
- Making meals for others, but refusing to eat as well.
- Avoidance of social gatherings where food will be present
- Looking for flaws in the mirror excessively
- Excessively exercising beyond a healthy point
- Complain about their weight, even though they are thin
- Covering up their weight loss with baggy clothes
- Isolating themselves from friends and family
- Quickly going to the bathroom to purge after meals

Anorexia affects the entire body. Every organ and process in the body is affected from the brain to the skin. The effects of anorexia will progress for the worse in all of these areas as well. Many individuals do not realize that the physical and mental effects of anorexia can often result in death, either through self-starvation and malnutrition or suicide from depression.

Many anorexics are embarrassed or ashamed by their condition, but it is extremely important that treatment be sought. Most treatment programs are individualized for the patient and combine medicine, therapy and nutritional guidance. The support of family and friends is also vital to reversing the effects of anorexia. Numerous treatment centers for eating disorder exist and the condition can be overcome if the individual seeks help before it is too late.