

**Eating Disorders: The Secret Disease that Steals Lives (Part 1 of 2)**  
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Eating Disorder (ED) - the mere mention of this creates panic in a family. It is common for a family to not know a member of the family has an ED. What may be shocking is it may not be the teenage daughter, but possibly the son, the mother, the pre pubertal child, the father, or even a grandparent. Most believe EDs occur in young women; however, the rate of EDs is growing in all populations and includes both genders, all races, and all ages.

This article is the first of two that will define EDs, provide important data, options for treatment, and resources. Officially there are three ED's- Anorexia Nervosa (AN), Bulimia Nervosa (BN), and Eating Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified (NOS). EDs in general represent a preoccupation with food/weight that leads to serious emotional, behavioral, social, interpersonal, and health issues that can cause life threatening consequences.

Symptoms associated with AN:

- Inability to maintain body weight above a minimally normal weight
- Intense fear of gaining weight
- Significant overestimate of current weight/body size
- Loss of menstruation
- Excessive time spent in preparing food, avoiding eating, and concern with weight

Symptoms associated with BN:

- Binges- large amounts of food are consumed alone in a period of time beyond what most people would eat, rapidly, often when not hungry, beyond comfortable fullness, and guilt typically follows consumption
- Lack of control to stop eating when bingeing
- Use of self induced vomiting (purging), laxatives, diuretics, fasting or excessive exercise to "compensate" for the binge
- Poor body image

Symptoms associated with Eating Disorder, NOS:

- Anorexia symptoms but menstruation present
- Anorexia symptoms and weight loss has occurred, but weight is within normal limits
- Binging/Purging are occurring but not at the frequency required to diagnose BN
- Purging after normal amounts of food are consumed
- Binge Eating Disorder (can also be referred to as compulsive overeating)
  - Binges as defined above
  - lack of control to stop eating when bingeing
  - not associated with "compensatory" behavior after a binge

*To follow in our next edition, warning signs, health consequences, mortality, etiology, treatment and resources.*