

# Eating Disorders

In the United States today, one out of every 100 girls develops anorexia nervosa and 4 out of every 100 develop bulimia nervosa. Eating disorders have become a serious problem in our country and Park Ridge is no exception. This condition is fatal in approximately 20% of those with *serious* eating disorders. Anorexia and bulimia are treatable disorders and full recovery is possible, but the success lies in early detection and treatment.

*Anorexia nervosa* is characterized by a 20-25% loss of body weight in a short period of time. Anorexics are preoccupied with food and have an intense and irrational fear of body fat and weight gain. As a result, they restrict the type and amount of food they eat (at times refraining from eating food altogether) and may exercise compulsively. In addition, they often have a perfectionist attitude and unrealistic expectations of themselves along with a distorted body image, low self-esteem and the need to please others. *Bulimia nervosa* is characterized by recurrent cycles of bingeing and purging. After bingeing, a bulimic may induce vomiting, abuse laxatives and/or diuretics or exercise compulsively. This is often an attempt to get rid of feelings of guilt, shame and loss of control. It is important to realize that bulimics are often at or above normal weight. They also experience depression, high anxiety and mood swings. Bulimics are similar to anorexics in their obsession with food, fear of fat or weight gain, perfectionism and high need to please others. Both disorders can cause severe and sometimes irreversible physical damage or death.

Eating disorders tend to be progressive in nature. People with eating disorders usually begin with behaviors that might easily be overlooked or denied. Much like substance abuse, experimentation is common and may or may not indicate an escalating problem, but awareness of the common symptoms will help you identify potentially problematic behaviors and intervene in a timely manner.

## Common symptoms of Eating Disorders

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• making frequent excuses for skipping meals</li><li>• extreme dissatisfaction with weight in spite of weight loss</li><li>• going to the restroom frequently, especially right after meals</li><li>• wearing multiple layers of clothing</li><li>• hair loss</li><li>• red or cut knuckles (a result of forced vomiting)</li><li>• lack of concentration, fuzzy thinking</li><li>• dizziness and fainting spells</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• mood swings, cries easily or is very angry</li><li>• large amounts of food disappear quickly</li><li>• obvious and rapid weight loss</li><li>• sudden onset of severe tooth decay</li><li>• obsession, preoccupation, or frequent mentioning of dieting, calories, weight, fat and/or exercise</li><li>• finding laxatives, diuretics, weight loss pills, herbal weight loss supplements</li><li>• isolation from family and friends</li></ul> |
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