

Disordered Eating Behaviors

If you're struggling with eating healthy, *you're not alone!* A high percentage of college women struggle with disordered eating behaviors. While these behaviors don't mean you have an "eating disorder" they can be very unhealthy and sometimes lead to more serious eating disorders, such as anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorders.

WHAT is considered Disordered Eating?

*Everyone has different eating patterns. What's important is that your eating patterns promote physical and psychological wellbeing.

*The following behaviors are common to women trying to lose weight or change their body shape or size, and are not considered healthy eating & lifestyle patterns. When taken to extreme, these behaviors can constitute an eating disorder.

1. Vomiting after you eat (this is **NEVER** healthy, not even occasionally!)

*Doing so can have serious medical consequences to your digestive system, cause damage to your esophagus and cause electrolyte imbalances.

2. Taking stimulant medication (any product containing ephedra or an ephedra derivative) for the purpose of weight loss.

*This is not a healthy way to lose weight because you'd need to take the medication forever to keep the weight off.

*Other medical consequences have been associated with these medications. In addition, these medications can interfere with sleep and the functioning of other body systems.

3. Exercising more than 4 hours per day, everyday for the purpose of weight loss.

*This amount of exercise can promote injuries, fatigue and nutritional deficiencies.

4. Taking laxatives for the purpose of weight loss or purging your body of food.

*Your body is made to eliminate food without the regular use of laxatives (unless you have direction to do so by a doctor for a medical condition).

*Doing so can create an imbalance of electrolytes and cause other nutritional deficiencies, not to mention damaging the normative functions of your digestive and elimination system.

Disordered Eating Behaviors (Cont.)

5. Restricting caloric intake and/or only eating certain foods.
 - *This can result in nutritional deficiencies, low energy, and can result in binge eating as a response to depriving your body of necessary calories.
 - *On the other hand, people who maintain a very low calorie diet eventually become anorexic. Anorexia is the deadliest of all psychological disorders, causing bone loss and organ failure.

6. Binge eating.
 - *Binge eating is eating that feels out of control, or eating a very large amount in a brief period of time. This can be in response to calorie deprivation, difficult emotional states, and other factors.
 - *Binge eating can cause obesity and associated health problems.

WHAT causes Disordered Eating behaviors?

- *Many factors contribute to these behaviors. Here are several common factors.
 1. Shame and negative judgment about one's body shape and/or size, and goals of achieving an "ideal" figure or weight.
 2. The media (T.V., movies, magazines) that popularizes both a very thin ideal of the female body, and promotes unhealthy dieting strategies.
 3. Cultural pressures. Living in a college environment (i.e. a residence hall) may promote unhealthy dieting strategies by watching others engage in them.
 4. Your personal learning history. Your family history and childhood experiences may contribute to your personal view of your body and the development of disordered eating strategies.

WHAT Can I Do To **STOP** Disordered Eating?

1. If you feel your eating behaviors are serious or "out of control", ask your doctor for a referral to a therapist.
 - *Psychotherapy has been shown to be helpful for behaviors associated with binge eating, bulimia and anorexia (i.e. vomiting, laxative use, excessive exercise, calorie restriction and binge eating). Get help before it gets serious!

2. Eat 4-5 small meals throughout the day.
 - * This way, you won't get too hungry and risk binge eating.

3. Eat when you're hungry!
 - * Many people think they need to wait for "mealtime" to eat. Mealtime needs to be whenever you are hungry!

Disordered Eating Behaviors (Cont.)

4. Identify your triggers for binge eating, and address these before the binge happens.
 - *Some common triggers are difficult emotions, being tired, being stressed, being bored.
5. Stop eating when you're full! Learn to respond to your stomach's signals of fullness and stop when you are satisfied but not full.
 - *Remove yourself from the food if necessary to stop eating.
5. Eat a healthy balance of protein, carbohydrates, fruits, vegetables and dairy.
 - *Our bodies do need each of these food groups, despite many popularized diets promoting restricting yourself to only one food group.
6. Let yourself indulge in a small amount of whatever food you are craving.
 - *Depriving yourself of that food will only increase your desire for it in the long run.
7. Notice negative thoughts you have about your body as **JUST THOUGHTS** and **NOT TRUTH!**
 - *In our society where a **THIN IDEAL** is promoted, it's no surprise many women have negative thoughts about their bodies.
 - *Lean to accept yourself as *beautiful*, no matter what your shape or size!
8. Finally, if you **DO** want to lose some weight, consult with your doctor.
 - *Ask if this is medically necessary (and how much you need to lose), and follow a healthy diet plan to accomplish that goal.