

ANOREXIA NERVOSA



What is Anorexia Nervosa?

Anorexia Nervosa is a serious medical and mental health condition that can be life-threatening. It is characterized by an obsessive fear of weight gain, a distorted body image, and a refusal to maintain a healthy body weight. Sufferers may restrict caloric intake or purge calories consumed through vomiting, laxative/diuretic abuse and/or compulsive exercise.

Anorexia often occurs alongside other mental illnesses, including:

- Depression
- Mood disorder
- Anxiety disorders
- Personality disorders
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Substance use disorders

Symptoms

One of the most common misconceptions about anorexia is that sufferers are underweight which is not always the case. In many instances, a patient with anorexia may appear to be healthy but is actually malnourished. It's important to understand all the warning signs and symptoms.

Medical Symptoms

- Significant/dramatic decrease in normal growth chart curve for weight
- Excessive or compulsive exercise
- Bradycardia (abnormally low heart rate) and/or orthostasis
- Absence of or delayed onset of or sporadic/light menses
- Fatigue or cold intolerance, dizziness and/or hair thinning/loss

Common behavioral warning signs

- Extreme weight loss
- Calorie restriction
- Obsession with food, weight, calories, and/or dieting
- Sudden interest in "healthy" or clean eating, vegetarianism, veganism, elimination diets, etc.
- Intense fear of being fat or weight gain
- Inability to maintain a healthy body weight
- Strange eating habits or food rituals
- Denial of hunger or weight loss
- Compulsive exercise
- Withdrawal from friends, family and activities/routines
- Personality changes, including increased irritability, depression and anxiety

Health Risks

The health risks associated with anorexia are serious. The most serious health risk of anorexia is increased mortality rate. Other health risks include:

- Cardiac implications
- Heart, kidney and liver failure
- Bone loss/osteoporosis
- Anemia
- Electrolyte imbalances
- Low blood sugar
- Constipation, bloating and other gastrointestinal issues
- Amenorrhea
- Fertility challenges
- Low testosterone
- Suicide

If you or someone you know is struggling with anorexia, seek help immediately. If left untreated, there can be far-reaching health consequences.

DID YOU KNOW?

Young people between the ages of 15 and 24 with anorexia have 10 times the risk of dying compared to their same-aged peers.¹ 1 in 5 anorexia deaths is by suicide.² 50-80% of the risk for anorexia is genetic.³

We're here to start the conversation with you

Recovery can begin with a single conversation. If you are feeling isolated and suffering - or you suspect suspect someone else is - we urge you to reach out to us. Please call our Masters-level clinicians today at **877-825-8584**.

1. Smink, van Hoeken & Hoek (2012)

2. Arcelus, J., Mitchell, A. J., Wales, J., & Nielsen, S. (2011). Mortality rates in patients with anorexia nervosa and other eating disorders: a meta-analysis of 36 studies. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 68(7), 724-731

3. Trace, S. E., Baker, J. H., Penas-Lledó, E., & Bulik, C. M. (2013). The genetics of eating disorders. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 9, 589-620.