

DISORDERED EATING & MENTAL HEALTH



As defined by the American Psychiatric Association, eating disorders are **“characterized by severe and persistent disturbance in eating behaviours and associated distressing thoughts and emotions”**

Causes and Susceptibility

- Biological - genetic relatedness to someone with an eating disorder, family members suffering from mental illness, type I diabetes
- Environment/ social - weight stigma, social media, personal relationships
- Psychological - negative body image, perfectionism, anxiety

Types of Eating Disorders

- **Anorexia nervosa** - severe restriction of food through restriction or binge/ purge behaviors
- **Bulimia nervosa** - uncontrollable bingeing episodes followed by purging, which can last from several days to weeks
- **Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID)** not related to body image, failure to meet energy needs that include significant weight loss, nutritional deficiency, dependence on enteral feeding or supplements, and/ or interference with psychosocial functioning
- **Binge-eating disorder** - frequent, uncontrolled overconsumption of food
- **Pica** - consumption of non-typical items with no nutritional value (ex. Hair, dirt, soap, wool) for a month or longer
- **Other specified feeding or eating disorder (OSFED)** - don't meet the criteria for an eating disorder but demonstrate many of the symptoms
- **Unspecified feeding or eating disorder (UFED)** doesn't meet the full criteria for an eating disorder, and the clinician does not specify the reason

Treatment - Helping Others

- Have a conversation to express your concern
- If they do not respond positively to the conversation - don't get upset, emphasize your concern, don't force the conversation
- Get informed, ask if they plan on telling others or moving towards recovery, and don't feel bad if you were unaware they were struggling
- When they respond negatively during recovery - take a step back, validate their feelings, and discuss how to handle these situations
- Consult the Stages of change model

Treatment - Helping Yourself

- Access resources, tell someone you trust, consider joining a support group, physical assessment to see if medical intervention is needed
- Surround yourself with positive influences, and don't be hard on yourself if you relapse
- Try mindful eating and listening to your body's fullness cues, avoid dieting
- Challenge negative thoughts about yourself
- Consult the Stages of change model

