

Hunger Pains

With all the diet and exercise programs on the market you can see that Americans are more concerned about their bodies than ever before. How can anyone ignore the beautiful and thin models that are plastered all over the media. The obsession with weight, shape and appearance pushes many people towards developing an eating disorder. Eating disorders include a range of conditions that involve an obsession with food, weight, and appearance to the degree that a person's health, relationships, and daily activities are affected. Three disorders that have been identified are:



- **Anorexia:** The person severely restricts food intake to produce weight loss. There is also an intense fear of gaining weight, a feeling of being fat even though underweight.
- **Bulimia:** A Person consumes a large amount of food in one sitting, then purges by inducing vomiting; using laxatives, diuretics or other medications; fasting; or excessive exercise in order to prevent weight gain.
- **Binge Eating Disorder:** The individual eats large amounts of food in a short period of time and feels a lack of control over eating. Many times these people eat alone because of embarrassment, and feeling disgusted, depressed or guilty after the episode. Binge-eating can lead to weight gain and obesity.

It is estimated that several million people in the United States suffer from eating disorders, and the statistics are growing. The majority of those afflicted are adolescent and young adult women although eating disorders can affect people of all ages and sexes.

Many of us occasionally experience unusual behavior, feelings or thoughts about food, having several of the following symptoms may signal an eating disorder.

- Fear of being unable to stop eating once you start
- Abusing drugs or alcohol before "binge eating"
- Intentional vomiting after meals
- Constant low-calorie or crash dieting
- Compulsive exercise with strict "exercise rules."
- Using body weight and being thin to measure self-worth
- Thinking and talking constantly about food
- Refusing to discuss food at all
- Using food to hide anger, loneliness, or feelings of rejection

The consequences of eating disorders can be severe; one in ten cases of anorexia nervosa leads to death from starvation, cardiac arrest, other medical complications, or suicide. If you are concerned about eating behaviors or attitudes, whether your own, a friend's, or family member's, consider professional