



Understanding Eating Disorders

Nearly 5% of the population is affected by an eating disorder.

1. Introduction

Eating disorders (EDs) are neurological disorders classified by persistent disturbances in healthy eating behaviors accompanied by distressing thoughts and emotions. These disorders commonly co-occur with other mental health conditions, including anxiety disorders, OCD, and substance use disorders.

2. Types

Though under the same umbrella, eating disorders can include overeating, undereating, and food restrictions. Some types include:

- + Anorexia and atypical anorexia
- + Avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID)
- + Binge eating disorder (BED)
- + Bulimia
- + Compulsive overeating
- + Diabulimia
- + Anorexia and Bulimia nervosa
- + Orthorexia
- + Other specified feeding and eating disorders (OSFED)

Each type has different disordered eating behaviors associated, except for OSFED, which is for EDs that don't match existing criteria.

3. Risk Factors

Eating disorders can affect anyone at any age, though several biological, psychological and/or social factors can increase the risk of developing an ED.

Biological Risk Factors

- + A history of dieting
- + Having a close relative with an ED or mental health condition
- + Low energy availability

Psychological Risk Factors

- + Emotional dysregulation
- + Body image dissatisfaction
- + History of mental health condition or substance use disorder

Social Risk Factors

- + Weight stigma and/or bullying
- + Loneliness or isolation
- + Experiencing trauma in the past

4. Treatments

Treatments for ED typically include treating both physical and mental aspects of the disorder. Each area of treatment has its own goals. Treatments for physical health focus on treating chronic conditions, weight restoration, and nutritional balance. Mental health goals can focus on assessing for mental illnesses, improving self-image, and normalizing healthy eating behaviors.

Did you know?

Eating disorders most often affect women ages 12-35.

For more information on eating disorders and supportive resources, please visit [nationaleatingdisorders.org](https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org).

References:

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/eating-disorders/what-are-eating-disorders>
- <https://www.eatingrecoverycenter.com/conditions>
- <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/risk-factors/>
- <https://www.aedweb.org/resources/about-eating-disorders>