

Counselling Services

EATING DISORDERS

An eating disorder is an obsession with food, eating, body image and appearance, a fear of becoming 'fat'. This obsession may lead to self destructive behaviours such as obsessive dieting and self starvation, uncontrollable binge eating and purging through vomiting and the use of laxatives, excessive exercising, hoarding, hiding or stealing food.

The major types of eating disorders are Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa. These occur most commonly in young women but increasingly in young men.

Symptoms

- **Anorexia**
 - Marked weight loss
 - Preoccupation with body weight and body image
 - Obsessive dieting
 - Extreme physical activity
 - Hair, skin and nail problems
 - Depression, low self esteem, irritability
 - Avoidance of eating in public
 - Cold extremities, tiredness
 - Irregular or cessation of menstruation
 - Denial
- **Bulimia**
 - Near average weight
 - Cycle of uncontrolled binge eating followed by purging
 - Abuse of laxatives and diuretics
 - Secretive eating behaviour
 - Damage to throat and teeth
 - Guilt
 - Depression / isolation
 - Sense of helplessness
 - Denial

What can help:

- If you are worried, talk to your friends, listen to your friends.
- Talk to a doctor
- Talk to a counsellor at the QUT Student Counselling Service

How others can help someone with an eating disorder:

- Focus on the person first, then the eating disorder
- Listen, be supportive, be caring.
- Seek Professional help.

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EATING DISORDERS (cont.)

Eating disorders are complex conditions, often due to a combination of stress, social pressure and psychological and biological factors. If left untreated they may lead to long term emotional and physiological problems.

Other Sources of Help and Information:

Further information regarding eating disorders is available from: the Anorexia and Bulimia Foundation website.

Better Health Channel at <http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/>

Eating Disorders Assoc (Qld) <http://www.eda.org.au/>

QUT Counselling Services offers professional assistance with this and other issues

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Gardens Point 3138 2383

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