



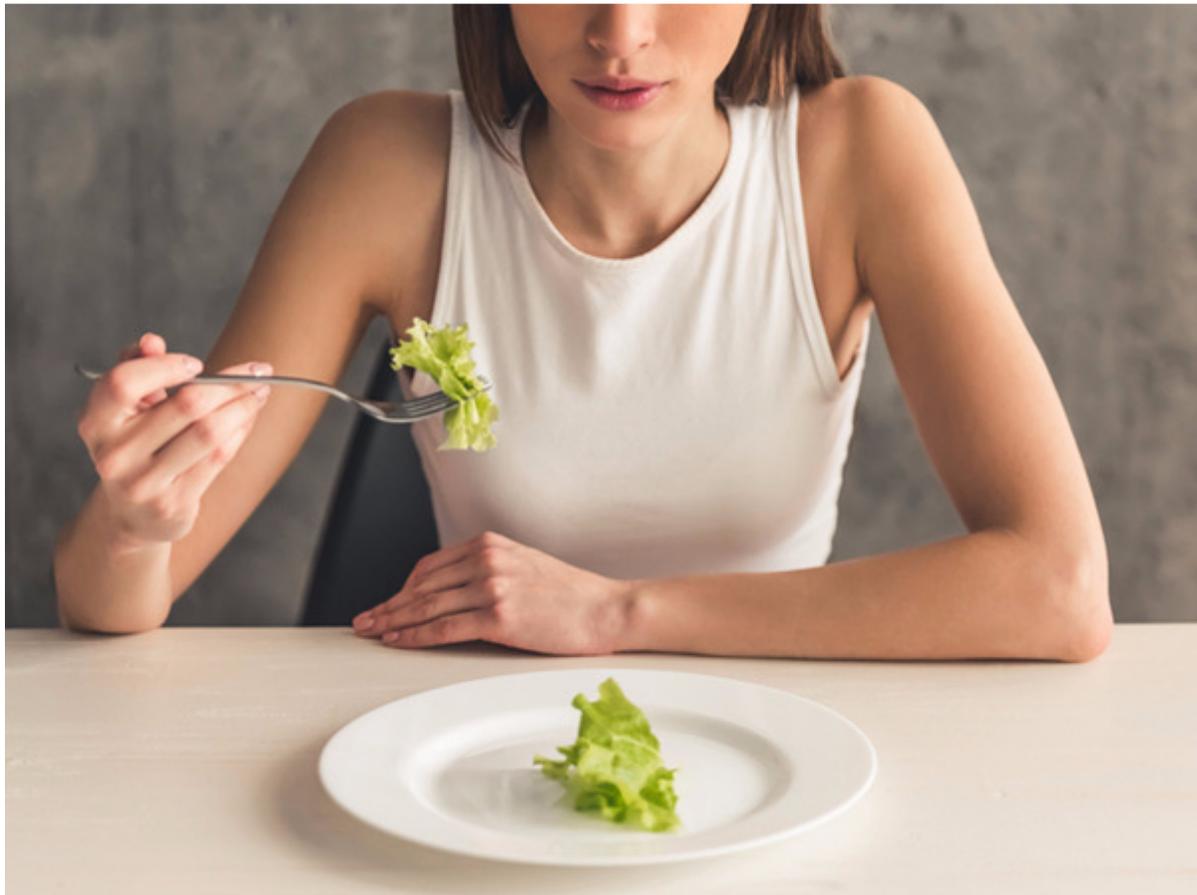
**Cassara Consulting**  
"Your Neighborhood Nutritionists"

Dietitian - Nutritionist - Education - Counseling - Insurance Accepted



1345 Kuser Rd, Suite 5 - Hamilton, NJ 08619 - phone: (609) 585-8400 - visit us on the web at: [www.cassaraconsulting.com](http://www.cassaraconsulting.com) - email: [info@cassaraconsulting.com](mailto:info@cassaraconsulting.com)

# Understanding Eating Disorders



vadinguzhva/Thinkstock

According to the American Psychiatric Association, millions of Americans suffer from an eating disorder and anyone can be affected. People of all sexes, genders, races, ethnicities, shapes and sizes can have an eating disorder.

All forms of eating disorders can be fatal, and it is critical for anyone with symptoms of an eating disorder to seek professional help. Early treatment gives the greatest chance for a full recovery.

## *Types of Eating Disorders*

There are three main types of eating disorders: anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder.

- **Anorexia nervosa** involves a severe restriction of calories; there may be a fear of weight gain and strict "rules" about eating. Binge eating followed by purging also may occur.

- **Bulimia nervosa** can involve these same fears and restrictions, but also involves a lack of control while binge eating may be followed by purging. This could involve vomiting or using laxatives or exercising excessively.
- People with **binge eating disorder** eat large amounts of food in a short amount of time. Food often is eaten without attention to hunger or fullness and is not purged afterwards.

A person with an eating disorder may display one symptom or many, and a person's appearance may not always display the amount of physical or emotional danger they're in or experiencing. It's critical to seek help even if someone appears to be at a "healthy weight."

### *Signs and Symptoms*

**Anorexia Nervosa** — Someone with anorexia may show any of the following:

- Dramatic weight loss and refusal to maintain a body weight that is healthy
- Wearing baggy clothes or layers to hide body shape
- A preoccupation with weight, exercise and/or calories
- Food restriction and avoidance
- Belief life will be better if weight is lost
- Use of diet pills, laxatives and/or enemas
- Isolation and fear of eating with others
- Food rituals and secretive eating patterns
- Disposing of food in strange places
- Keeping a "food diary" or lists of calories and exercise
- Hair loss, sunken eyes, pale skin
- Dizziness and headaches
- Low self-esteem and need for approval from others
- Feeling cold
- Low blood pressure and heart rate
- Loss of menstrual cycle or irregular menstrual periods
- Constipation, stomach pain
- Perfectionist personality
- Loss of sexual desire
- Mood swings, depression, anxiety and/or fatigue
- Trouble sleeping

**Bulimia Nervosa** — Signs of bulimia include many of those listed above, and also may include:

- Bruised or callused knuckles, bloodshot eyes, light bruising under eyes
- Sore throat and/or swollen glands
- Binging and/or purging
- Fear of not being able to control eating
- Trips to the bathroom following meals, sometimes using running water to hide the sound of vomiting

**Binge Eating Disorder** — In addition to the signs listed for anorexia and bulimia, compulsive overeating also may include:

- Chronic dieting with or without weight loss
- Eating in private
- Eating very quickly
- Eating until uncomfortably full
- Feeling depressed or ashamed about eating habits
- High blood pressure and/or cholesterol

- Weight gain

### *Health Effects*

Eating disorders affect health in many ways and put nonstop strain on your body and brain. The lack of nutrition can lead to vitamin and mineral deficiencies, hormone loss and electrolyte imbalances.

- **Anorexia Nervosa:** The process of starvation can affect most organ systems. Physical dangers include constipation, low heart rate and blood pressure, abdominal pain, dry skin, fine body hair and lack of menstrual periods. Anorexia also causes anemia, bone loss, kidney problems and changes in brain function.
- **Bulimia Nervosa:** Vomiting and laxative abuse can lead to swollen glands, vitamin and mineral imbalance and wearing down of tooth enamel. There also can be long-lasting problems with digestion and the heart.
- **Binge Eating Disorder:** This disorder brings an increased risk for a heart attack, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, kidney disease, arthritis, bone loss and stroke.

For more information, consult a registered dietitian nutritionist who specializes in eating disorders.