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## Eating Disorders

### What is an eating disorder?

An eating disorder is a coping strategy that an individual uses to deal with deeper problems, which are too painful or difficult to address directly. Clinical eating disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and obesity or binge-eating disorder. Eating disorders are expressions of underlying psychosocial problems.

Chances are you know someone — probably a teen-age girl or young woman — who suffers from anorexia or bulimia. Though the perception is that eating disorders are nearly impossible to treat, experts say that close to 90% of the time, people can overcome them.

Unfortunately, says Edward J. Cumella, PhD, director of one of the leading treatment centers for eating disorder in the United States, eating disorders are all too common. One out of 10 women will suffer from an eating disorder at some point in her life; for adolescents, that number is one out of 5.

Though eating disorders strike girls and women more often, boys and men are not immune, says Denise Lensky, PhD, director of the Eating Disorders Program at Belmont Center for Comprehensive Treatment, part of Albert Einstein Healthcare Network in Philadelphia. If left untreated, or if treatment isn't successful, eating disorders can result in serious physical problems, including low blood sugar, pancreas and liver damage, heart failure, osteoporosis, heart rhythm problems, and thought impairment.

“It's important to get help, because eating disorders lead to death in 15% of cases,” says Salvatore Cullari, PhD, chair of the psychology department at Lebanon Valley College in Annville, PA, and a specialist in treating people afflicted by eating disorders. If you suspect that a friend or family member has an eating disorder, you need to talk to that person. They often don't know that this is a life-threatening, serious disorder, and that it can be treated.

There has always been a perception of high failure rates when it comes to treating eating disorders, but that's not really the case, says Lensky. “Eating disorders can be as successfully treated as any other compulsive behavioral disorder,” she says. “People



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who suffer from eating disorders feel hopeless and ashamed, which may keep them from seeking help. But when they do, eating disorders are treatable.”

### **What does it mean to have an eating disorder?**

The most common element surrounding all eating disorders is the inherent presence of a low self-esteem. In people who suffer from eating disorders it is not uncommon to find other associated psychological disorders that co-exist with their Anorexia, Bulimia and/or Compulsive Overeating. Men and women may also suffer from both an eating disorder and other psychological disorder(s) that completely co-exist with one another... or they can suffer from an eating disorder and have little or no signs of an additional psychological disorder (Note: The longer a person suffers, the more probable that they may be dealing with depression or anxiety as well). It is important to the recovery process and treatment that all these issues are addressed, and that a proper diagnosis be determined.

Eating disorders are serious health conditions that can be both physically and emotionally destructive. People with eating disorders need to seek professional help. Early diagnosis and intervention significantly enhance recovery. If not identified or treated in their early stages, eating disorders can become chronic, debilitating, and even life-threatening conditions. Treatment is available. Recovery is possible.

**Call us at 800-561-8158 today** and tell us about your situation, learn more about how to initiate an intervention and **what to expect** from the process.