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# Treating Eating Disorders

Eating disorders include anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder. All involve eating patterns that can harm your health and can greatly disrupt your life. For most people, treatment can help. Think about talking with your healthcare provider, nurse, school counselor, or someone you trust. The first step is finding the guidance and support that you need.

## What causes eating disorders?

Right now, no one knows just what causes eating disorders. They occur in about half a million people, mostly young women. These disorders don't just affect your body, they also affect the way you feel about yourself. For you to become healthy, your body and your mind both need care.

## Healing your body

If you're weak, ill, or very thin, you may need to be in the hospital for a time. You'll eat healthy foods so you gain weight in a healthy manner and become stronger. You'll also learn the best way to eat once you're home.

You may be advised to keep a food diary. This is a log of what you eat and drink each day. A food diary can help you and your healthcare provider understand your eating habits.

## Healing your emotions

You might talk with a therapist about your feelings, your family, or the problems in your life. This can help you understand how emotions affect the way you eat. Family therapy is generally a part of the healing process. You'll also learn how to change your eating habits and cope with stress. In time, you'll likely start feeling better about yourself. Sometimes you may also take certain medicines. These may make you feel less depressed. They may also help you stop binge eating and purging. Some medicines may help you worry less about your weight.

## Looking toward the future

Sometimes people with eating disorders get better for a time. Then they may start having problems again. If this happens to you, tell someone as soon as any of the symptoms return. In most cases, you'll stay healthy for years. But you may need some extra help now and then.

## To learn more

- [National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders at www.anad.org](http://www.anad.org) or 888-375-7767
- [National Eating Disorders Association at www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org) or 800-931-2237
- [National Institute of Mental Health at www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov) or 866-615-6464