



Anorexia (Anorexia Nervosa)



Overview

This is an eating disorder. It causes you to have a body weight that's so low it's unhealthy. If you have anorexia, you have a strong fear of gaining weight. Even if you weigh much less than you should, you want to lose more. This can be very harmful. It can be life threatening.

Causes and Risk Factors

We don't know what causes anorexia. It's more common in girls. It may be linked to your genes or hormones. Your beliefs about health and beauty may play a role. Your risk is higher if you don't have a positive body image, and if you feel a strong need to be perfect. You are more likely to have anorexia if you had an anxiety disorder or an eating problem as a child.

Symptoms

The most obvious symptom of anorexia is a very low body weight. You may be obsessed with diet and exercise, even if you are very thin. A person with anorexia may not like to eat in front of others. He or she may use diet pills, laxatives, and pills that cause urination. The person may go to the bathroom right after a meal. Some people make themselves throw up after eating. Anorexia can cause your mouth to become dry and your skin to become dry, blotchy or yellow. You may have trouble thinking clearly. You may struggle with depression. Your muscles may waste away. Your bones may become thin. We call this "osteoporosis."

Treatment

Anorexia can be treated with talk therapy and with support groups. Medications may also help. You may need to be hospitalized so you can be fed through an IV or a tube. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that's right for you.

Actor portrayals in photos

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