

Bulimia (Bulimia Nervosa)



Overview

This is an eating disorder. It causes you to have episodes where you eat a large amount of food, uncontrollably and all at once. We call this "binging." Then, you vomit or use laxatives to expel the food so you don't gain weight. We call this "purging." Bulimia can be very harmful to your health.

Causes

We don't know what causes bulimia. It's more common in teenage girls and young women. It may be linked to your genes. It may be linked to psychological factors involving your family, society or culture. Several factors may be involved.

Symptoms

If you have bulimia, you may binge often and secretly. Some people binge several times a day. After bingeing, you may force yourself to vomit. You may use diet pills, laxatives and pills that cause urination to help keep your weight down. And even if you have a healthy body weight, you may believe you are too heavy.

Warning Signs

Bulimia can be hard to detect, because a person who has it may maintain a normal weight. But there are warning signs. A person who has bulimia may hoard high-calorie food. He or she may go to the bathroom right after meals. Frequent vomiting can cause dental problems and other issues. And, many people who have bulimia also struggle with issues like self-injury, substance abuse and risky behaviors.

Treatment

Bulimia can be treated with talk therapy and with support groups. Medications may also help. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that's right for you.