



Pica



Overview

This is an eating disorder. With it, you crave things that don't have nutritional value, such as dirt, paper or paint. This can be bad for your health.

Causes

We don't fully understand what causes this disorder. It can be linked to a mineral deficiency in your body. It can be triggered by low levels of iron or zinc. Pica is more common in young children. And, some women experience it during pregnancy.

Symptoms

People who have pica may eat things like clay, dirt, sand or ash. They may eat hair or animal feces. They may eat paint, soap, chalk or ice. A person can be diagnosed as having pica if they crave a non-food substance for at least one month.

Treatment

Treatment depends on your needs. If you have a nutritional deficiency or other medical problem, treatment for that issue may help. You may benefit from therapy to help you control your craving. If pica is caused by a developmental disorder, medication may help. Your first step is to make an appointment for treatment. Your primary care doctor or a mental health professional will find the right treatment for you.

Actor portrayals in photos

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