

Eating Disorders Awareness

There is an epidemic in America. 10 million people having an eating disorder and 90-95% of those individuals are female.

One in ten college women meet the criteria for anorexia, and one in five college women meet the criteria for bulimia, and individuals who only binge eat may be three times as high as those who are anorexic or bulimic.

About 1 out of every 6 young women has substantially disordered eating attitudes and behaviors. Some students come to college with eating disorders. Some develop them during the college years.

What makes the college years so vulnerable for students in terms of the development of eating disorders?

College students are particularly vulnerable to eating disorders not only due to aspects of the college environment, but also due to individual characteristics and histories that each student brings.

- Fear of the "Freshman 15"
- Unlimited access to food in dining halls
- Academic, social, and financial stress
- Participation in sports where weight and appearance are perceived to affect success
- The semi-closed nature of college may intensify the pressure to be thin
- Stress associated with the transition from college and expectations to this new environment
- Stress of impending graduation and the changes implied in that transition.

What are the individual factors that contribute to eating disorders?

- High self-expectations/perfectionism
- "All or nothing" thinking
- Extreme need for approval
- Low self-esteem/poor body image
- Pre-existing anxiety or depression

The following information may be helpful in identifying eating disorders.

Warning Signs for Anorexia

- A person is thin and keeps getting thinner, losing 15% or more of ideal body weight
- Continues to diet or restrict foods, though not overweight
- Has a distorted body image; feels fat but isn't
- Is preoccupied with food, calories, nutrition, or cooking
- Denies hunger
- Exercises obsessively
- Weighs self frequently
- Complains about feeling bloated or nauseated even when eating normal or less than normal quantities of food
- Hair loss or thinning hair
- Feels cold even though the temperature is normal or only slightly cool
- Stops menstruating

Warning Signs for Bulimia

- Engages in binge eating and cannot voluntarily stop
- Reacts to emotional stress by overeating
- Feels guilty or ashamed about eating

- Is obsessively concerned about weight
- Attempts to adhere to diets, but generally fails
- Uses the bathroom frequently after meals
- Feels out of control
- Has depressive moods
- Experiences frequent fluctuations in weight
- Has menstrual irregularities
- Has persistent, even when otherwise healthy, swollen glands

Warning Signs for Binge Eating

- Eats large amounts of food when not physically hungry
- Eats much more rapidly than normal
- Eats until the point of feeling uncomfortably full
- Often eats alone because of shame or embarrassment
- Has feelings of depression, disgust, or guilt after eating
- Has a history of marked weight fluctuations
- Feels out of control while eating

If you suspect that you or someone you care about has an eating disorder and you would like information on how to get support and help, please contact Counseling & Psychological Services at 610-902-8561 or stop by Grace Hall, Room 174 to speak confidentially with a counselor.