



Anorexia Nervosa

Information Booklet



Anorexia Nervosa

What is Anorexia Nervosa?

Anorexia nervosa is one particular type of eating disorder which affects the person's relationship with food and their body. It causes the young person to become preoccupied with weight and body shape to the point that weight loss becomes a central feature of their life. Their thinking about their body and about food becomes distorted by their illness and consequently they have difficulty making any realistic appraisals about food or their own body shape. Their behaviour becomes almost solely directed towards the goal of weight loss with previous interests becoming secondary and relationships with friends and family frequently becoming strained as others struggle to comprehend the behaviour. Anorexia nervosa is a serious mental health illness which affects all sorts of people. The prevalence of Anorexia nervosa in adolescents stands at 1%, with 20% becoming chronic in nature and about 6% will die of the illness.

Symptoms

May include -

- Deliberate weight loss with restriction of food intake.
- Weight below 85% of expected weight.
- Have a dread of gaining weight and over evaluate their shape and weight.
- Amenorrhea for 3 months or longer.

Other Symptoms include -

- Physical symptoms; fatigue, hypothermia, hypotension, slow pulse, peripheral oedema, gaunt face, fine thin body hair, scanty pubic hair, cardiac arrhythmias. Delay in sexual development.
- Symptoms of depression and obsessions.
- Preoccupation with food and enjoyment of cooking for others.
- Social withdrawal with few interests.
- Enhanced weight loss by over exercising, diuretics, laxatives and self vomiting .



Problem?

If you answer yes to two or more of the following you should talk to your GP (Family Doctor).

- Do you make yourself sick because you are uncomfortably full?
- Do you worry that you've lost control over how much you eat?
- Have you recently lost more than 6kg (about one stone) in the past three months?
- Do you believe you're fat when others think you are thin?
- Would you say that food dominates your life?

Related Conditions

- Bulimia Nervosa
- Obesity
- Binge Eating
- Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (EDNOS)
- Pica
- Rumination Disorder
- Failure to Thrive and Feeding Disorders
- Functional Dysphagia
- Physical illness

Who gets Anorexia Nervosa?

Anyone can get Anorexia Nervosa! Approximately 1 in 100 people will have Anorexia Nervosa. It is about 10 times more common in girls than boys, but this appears to be changing. Most common time to develop Anorexia Nervosa is late adolescence but younger children can be affected. It is not a new condition with it being described since the 1860's.

Despite the concerns around media representation of "very thin body ideal", studies have failed to demonstrate an increase in prevalence. Instead it may highlight the disorder leading to an increase in identification and treatment seeking.

Distinguishing “normal dieting” from Eating Disorder Symptoms

- Denial of being on a “diet”
- Denial of hunger or craving
- Claims to needing less food than others
- Change in food rules e.g. vegetarianism , or not eating after 6pm
- Hiding weight loss e.g. wearing baggy clothes
- Increased interest in foods / cooking for others
- Unusual eating behaviours, eating very slowly, chopping food up into tiny pieces, segregating foods.
- Eating alone
- Postprandial bathroom trips
- Ritualised behaviours
- Socially isolated, low mood
- Increased exercise

Look - For the signs and symptoms

Listen - To your friends experiences

Talk - About what's going on

Seek Help



Treatment

If you are unsure that you need treatment, seeing your GP (Family Doctor) is a good way to start.

The overall aim of treatment is to:

- A) Restore a healthy Body Mass Index (BMI)
- B) Change the “faulty”, maladaptive thinking i.e. fear of “fatness”
- C) Address other non-food/weight issues such as maturity fears, perfectionism and interpersonal relationship problems.

- Behavioural Interventions
- Psychoeducation - Individual and family
- A range of Talking Therapies including CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy)
- Family Therapy
- Dietetics
- Dual Diagnosis management
- Medication deemed necessary by your doctor or psychiatrist
- These treatments may be as an Outpatient, Day Patient or as a Inpatient

More Support & Information

- Bodywhys- phone 1890 200 444
- Samaritans - phone 1850 60 90 90
- Teenline - phone 1800 833 634
- Your Local GP / Mental Health Nurse
- In emergencies please call 112/999 or visit your local Emergency Department

Websites

Bodywhys - www.bodywhys.ie
Headstrong - www.headstrong.ie
SpunOut - www.spunout.ie
Childline - www.childline.ie

St Patrick's Mental Health Services

James' Street, Dublin 8, Ireland.

t: +353 1 249 3200. f: +353 1 679 8865.

Support & Information Line: 01 249 3333

e: info@stpatsmail.com

www.stpatricks.ie