



Eating Disorders: Tips on how to help students

The transition to postsecondary education is known to be a difficult time and the campus environment can be a breeding ground for the development or aggravation of eating disorders, which are more and more prevalent. This infosheet presents an overview of these disorders and offers tips to support student's affected by it.

ANOREXIA NERVOSA

Anorexia Nervosa is defined by a relentless pursuit of thinness and a morbid fear of the consequences of eating, usually expressed as a dread of weight gain or obesity. The result is a willful and often dramatic restriction of food intake.

BULIMIA NERVOSA

Bulimia Nervosa is characterized by consumption of excessive, sometimes massive quantities of calories accompanied by a terrifying sense of dyscontrol. By definition, people with bulimia compensate for overeating through self-induced vomiting, laxative misuse, intensive exercise, fasting, or other means.

BINGE EATING DISORDER

Like bulimia, Binge Eating Disorder (BED) is characterized by recurrent eating binges. However, in BED compensatory behaviors such as vomiting, exercise or fasting are absent, so that BED is associated with eventual obesity.

Risk Factors:

- Feelings of low self-esteem or self-worth
- Feeling a general lack of control, feeling powerless
- A need for perfection
- Difficult family relationships
- Sudden change in life
- A history of abuse or trauma.

CONSEQUENCES

Physical

- Weight gain or weight loss
- Blue extremities
- Orange complexion
- Swollen salivary glands, teeth loss
- Esophagus inflammation
- Heart problems
- Anemia
- Infertility

Psychological

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Mood swings, irritability
- Impulsivity
- Sleep disorders
- Memory and concentration problems
- obsessive thoughts

Sociales

- Isolation
- Impact on school and work
- Social anxiety
- Family conflicts

AVAILABLE TREATMENTS FOR EATING DISORDERS

Eating disorders are complicated. Treatment will include help from a combination of medical, psychological and nutrition experts, along with help from the family. Treatment can include:

- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Individual or group counselling
- Family-based therapy
- Hospitalization if necessary
- Drugs
- Relapse prevention

HOW YOU CAN HELP A STUDENT



To Do

- Listen
- Assure the student that he/she/they are not alone
- Encourage the student to seek help
- Be patient, recovery takes time



To Avoid

- Force the student to eat
- Talk about food or weight
- Blame or get angry with the student



Prevention

- Inform of risks associated with diets
- Offer mental health services
- Encourage body diversity and positivity
- Offer information workshop

ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR

- Don't doubt or challenge the idea that the student is suffering from an eating disorder
- Do not simplify the issue
- Do not judge
- Do not suggest that bulimia is less serious than anorexia
- Do not give advice regarding weight loss, exercise or their physical appearance
- Do not confront the individual in front of a group
- Do not take the role of therapist, victim or rescuer
- Do not get into an argument

WATCH THE WEBINAR

To learn more about eating disorders and how to help your students affected by it, please watch the webinar (in french only) at <https://campusmentalhealth.ca/webinars/les-troubles-alimentaires/>

Credit for this webinar and content go to Dr Christine Courbasson, clinical psychologist and Nicole Boulanger, dietician at BANA.