

# The Body and Food: When Things Get Out of Balance



Have you ever felt stressed about what you eat? Maybe you worry about fitting in with friends or what you see in magazines. For some people, these feelings can become so strong that they turn into something more serious called an eating disorder. An eating disorder isn't about just liking or disliking certain foods. It's a mental illness, which means it's a problem with the brain that affects how someone thinks and feels. People with eating disorders get stuck in unhealthy patterns around food, weight, and their body image.

## What happens with eating disorders:

- **Thoughts and feelings about food and weight get WAY out of whack.** People with eating disorders might obsess over how much they weigh or how they look in the mirror, even if they're perfectly healthy.
- **Eating habits become extreme.** Someone may eat very little, or eat a lot at one time and then feel like they need to get rid of it by throwing it up (purging) or using laxatives (medicine that makes you go to the bathroom).
- **Someone might exercise way too much,** even when they're tired or injured.



## Some common types of eating disorders:

- **Anorexia nervosa:** This is when someone restricts their eating a lot and becomes very thin, even though they might not see how thin they are.
- **Bulimia nervosa:** This is when someone has episodes of eating a lot of food very quickly (binge eating) and then tries to get rid of it (purging).
- **Binge-eating disorder:** This is when someone has frequent episodes of binge eating but doesn't purge afterward.



# The Body and Food: When Things Get Out of Balance



## Why do eating disorders happen?

There's no single reason someone gets an eating disorder. It can be a combination of things, like:

- **Genes:** Sometimes, genes can make someone more likely to develop an eating disorder.
- **Emotions:** People might use food or eating habits to cope with difficult emotions like stress, anxiety, or sadness.
- **Pressure to look a certain way:** Our culture can put a lot of emphasis on being thin, which can make people feel bad about their bodies.

## How to Get Help for an Eating Disorder

Eating disorders are serious and should be taken seriously, but they're also treatable. If you think you or someone you know might have an eating disorder, it's important to get help from a doctor, therapist, or counselor. They can create a treatment plan to help get them back on track to a healthy relationship with food and their body. With support, eating disorder recovery is possible!



### Here are some things to remember:

- You're not alone. Eating disorders are more common than you might think.
- There is help available. Many professionals can help people recover from eating disorders.
- Recovery is possible. With treatment, people with eating disorders can get back to feeling healthy and happy.

**If you're worried about yourself or someone you care about, don't hesitate to reach out for help. Remember, a healthy body and a healthy mind go hand-in-hand!**