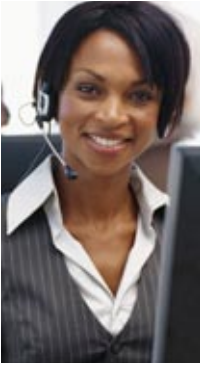




# BalanceWorks® Newsletter

February 2009 | Written by the work/life experts at **eni**



## National Eating Disorders Awareness Week

The last week of February is designated as “National Eating Disorders Awareness Week.” Eating disorders are a serious and destructive illness that kills one out of ten people afflicted. Those with eating disorders have an enemy and/or obsession with their self image and food. If you, a friend, or family member is suffering from an eating disorder, you can get help. Read the information below to learn more about disorders and how you can help treat them.

### **Anorexia Nervosa**

People who have anorexia nervosa try to starve themselves thin. This condition usually begins in puberty, and tends to strike young people with perfectionist, obedient personalities. Some psychologists believe that people with anorexia nervosa are attempting to control their food intake and weight because they feel unable to control other aspects of their lives.

People with anorexia may also exercise obsessively, induce vomiting, and use laxatives to purge themselves further. They may also go through phases of bulimia nervosa. If the disease progresses far enough, all of the symptoms of starvation occur: irregular heartbeat, brittle hair and nails, dry, yellowish skin, and depression.

### **Bulimia Nervosa**

People who have bulimia nervosa will binge on food and then force themselves to vomit, use a laxative, or take a diuretic. Bulimics may binge and purge several times a week or even several times a day. Unlike people with anorexia, people with bulimia are often at or near a normal weight.

Symptoms of bulimia include a sore throat, tooth decay (due to the teeth being exposed to stomach acid), swollen salivary glands in the neck and cheeks, and a puffy face. Serious cases of bulimia can cause dehydration and electrolyte imbalance, which can cause heart failure.

### **Binge Eating Disorder**

People with binge eating disorder eat large amounts of food without being hungry, and are often obese. This condition is similar to bulimia, except the person does not purge after binging. In men, this disorder is more common than either anorexia or bulimia. People with this condition may abuse alcohol and other drugs, and may also have a history of losing and regaining weight. Binge eating disorder is also associated with depression.



For more information or advice about National Eating Disorders Awareness Week, contact the work/life experts at BalanceWorks® by calling

**1.800.327.2255.**

**eni's** BalanceWorks® program is a confidential 24/7 service provided by your employer to help achieve work/life balance.



## When You or a Loved One Has an Eating Disorder



People with these conditions usually have underlying emotional problems such as low self-esteem, depression, and a distorted body image, and must be treated by a therapist.

Treatment must

often be provided in a hospital for severe cases of these illnesses. People must be taught to eat normally again, which often requires careful supervision.

Treatment includes individual therapy and, sometimes, family counseling.

Antidepressant medications are sometimes prescribed as well, but need to be monitored carefully. Treatment of these conditions is difficult, but people with eating disorders have a good chance at recovery, especially if the illness is caught early.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimated that more than 90 percent of those who have eating disorders are women between the ages of 12 and 25. But even children, older women and men have these disorders.

### Symptoms to watch for in others:

- Weight loss
- Difficulty getting children to join you for meals
- Preoccupation with food and counting calories
- Signs of being unhappy with themselves or their body image
- Compulsive exercising
- Regularly going to the bathroom after meals

- Discarded packaging of laxatives, diet pills, drugs that induce vomiting

### Symptoms to watch for in yourself:

- Fear of being unable to stop eating once you start
- Abusing drugs or alcohol before “binge eating”
- Intentional vomiting after meals
- Constant low-calorie or crash dieting
- Compulsive exercise with strict “exercise rules”
- Using body weight and being thin to measure self-worth
- Thinking or talking constantly about food
- Refusing to discuss food at all
- Using food to hide anger, loneliness or feelings of rejection

Eating disorders need to be treated and can end up deadly. If you or someone you know has an eating disorder, take necessary steps to get help immediately. Therapy can find the underlying reasons for these illnesses, and medical treatment can help the body recover. Take action against eating disorders now.

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