



Bulimia Nervosa

Have you ever gone on an "eating binge" and felt unable to stop? Do you vomit afterwards? Do you hate looking in the mirror? Is your life controlled by food and dieting?

If you agree with some of these statements, bulimia nervosa may be a problem. People with bulimia typically binge by eating large amounts of high calorie food in a short period of time and then "purge" to rid themselves of excess calories. Triggers for binges include anxiety, relationship problems, boredom, prolonged dieting, and body image dissatisfaction. At first, bingeing seems to reduce negative feelings and stress. But relief is short-lived and usually followed by feelings of intense shame and distress.

To compensate for bingeing, individuals with the disorder engage in purging behaviors, including vomiting, over-exercising, fasting, laxative abuse and taking diet pills. This seems to temporarily relieve fear of weight gain by reducing feelings of fullness. But the effect quickly disappears, usually leaving individuals feeling more hopeless and out of control than before.

Like those with anorexia, the self-worth of people with bulimia is directly tied to their body shape and weight. They often check their body size through frequent weighing, measuring, pinching, and viewing themselves in a mirror. Their poor body image often drives their obsessive attempts to avoid weight gain and relieve anxiety.

Medical and Psychological Consequences

Purging causes dehydration and electrolyte imbalances that can lead to irregular heartbeats, possible heart failure and death. Other medical complications can include esophageal tears, gastrointestinal problems, and dental problems. Bulimia often coincides with major depression, substance abuse, anxiety disorders and other mental health issues.

What You Can Do

If you or a loved one has bulimia, there's good news. Effective treatment is available. At Pathways Counseling Center, we specialize in helping individuals overcome bulimia and other eating disorders. Our psychotherapist, Heather Kitchen, MSW, LCSW, is an eating disorder specialist who collaborates with physicians, dieticians and other practitioners to offer the most effective care possible. So don't wait—get help now. Your life and well being may depend on it. Call us at 336-686-1689