



PATIENT INFORMATION

Warning Signs of Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are secretive by nature – people will attempt to hide the symptoms and effects of the disorder (like covering up drastic weight loss with layers of clothing, or hiding “binge” foods under a bed or in some other hiding place). The symptoms can also be hard to recognize until the problem has gotten out of control. Symptoms in teenagers can be even harder to detect because some warning signs (like moodiness) look like normal adolescent behavior. Some people exhibit many of the following warning signs and symptoms, while others may exhibit only a few.

Mental and Emotional Symptoms of Eating Disorders

- preoccupation with body appearance or weight
- moodiness, irritability, confusion or shakiness
- reduced concentration, memory, and thinking ability
- depression or suicidal thoughts
- anxiety, especially around meal times

Behavioral Symptoms of Eating Disorders

- dieting or making frequent excuses not to eat
- overeating or hoarding food
- obsessive rituals such drinking only out of a certain cup, or eating certain foods
- wearing baggy clothes, or a change in clothing style
- trips to the bathroom after meals

Social Symptoms of Eating Disorders

- social withdrawal or isolation
- avoidance of social situations involving food
- decreased interest in hobbies

Physical Symptoms of Eating Disorders

Warning signs for anorexia include:

- Dramatic recent weight loss unrelated to an illness
- In women, missing three consecutive menstrual periods
- No energy or complaints about feeling cold all the time
- Dry, lifeless hair; brittle nails, poor skin tone

Resources: Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc. at www.anred.com Academy for Eating Disorders at www.aedweb.org National Eating Disorders Association at www.nationaleatingdisorders.org