

Harris, R.T. (1991, March-April). Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa in Female Adolescents, *Nutrition Today*, pp. 30-34.

OVERVIEW

According to the article, "An eating disorder is defined as a disturbance in eating behavior that jeopardizes a person's physical or psychosocial health. Anorexia nervosa is the most well-known of the eating disorders and is found most frequently among middle- to upper-class white female adolescents. It carries a 19:1 female-male ratio with a prevalence estimated at 1% among adolescent girls." "Anorectic patients pursue and maintain thinness despite the emaciation and malnourishment which is so apparent to others and also despite the fact that they frequently do not lose their appetite."

"Treatment of adolescent anorexia nervosa consists of four components:

- * Correction of medical complications;
- * Nutritional support and rehabilitation;
- * Pharmacotherapy where indicated, and;
- * Psychotherapy and behavior therapy."

"Bulimia nervosa is characterized by the self-perpetuating practice of binge-eating followed by self-induced vomiting or other forms of purging behaviors." "The abnormal eating may be done in response to anxiety states in an effort to achieve a soothing emotional effect." It is possible that "assorted foods containing 20,000 calories or more may be consumed in 1 to 2 hours." "Binges stop with self-induced vomiting, abdominal discomfort, social interruption, abuse of cathartic or diuretic drugs or fatigue and sleep."

Three components of a sound treatment program include:

- * Correction of medical complications;
- * Behavior and psychotherapy; and
- * Pharmacotherapy.

INITIAL SCREENING QUESTIONS

- * How has your weight been recently and does it change rapidly, up and down?
- * Are you happy with your weight and appearance?
- * How has your appetite been recently?
- * What is your typical day's diet like?
- * What kind of mood have you been in recently?
- * Does eating cause your moods or feelings to change, for the better or worse?

FURTHER SCREENING QUESTIONS

- * Are there certain foods which give you trouble or that you might eat in excess if you feel sad, angry, or nervous?
- * Do you ever fear that you might eat more than you should or that you might not be able to control your eating?
- * Does overeating cause you to feel guilty or depressed?
- * What do you do in response to guilt feelings you have when you overeat?
- * Are you more likely to overeat in private or with others around?
- * Have you ever discussed your concerns about your eating or your body weight or appearance concerns with anyone?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Are you and those you know aware of the serious effects of these disorders?
2. How could you best provide help to someone who you suspected had an eating disorder?
3. What might happen if this problem continued to be ignored?
4. Do you think that people who suffer from eating disorders are aware of their problem? If yes, why are they not getting help? If no, why do you think they don't know?

IMPLICATIONS

Anyone who is concerned with eating disorders should seek out help from a physician, psychologist, school counselor, or dietitian. These professionals as well as parents should be aware of the signs and seriousness of these eating disorders and should be able to provide help or find help for anyone suspected of having one of these disorders.

Tamara Lange cCYS