

Signs and Symptoms of Anorexia Nervosa



People with anorexia nervosa (AN) have unhealthy obsessions with body weight and food such that they severely restrict food intake and exercise excessively to maintain a body weight below the normal range for their height and age. Some people with AN may alternate restricting with bingeing/purging behavior. If untreated, the disorder can lead to many serious health complications, including heart problems, kidney problems, bone loss, gastrointestinal disturbances, electrolyte imbalances, anemia, and death.

Physical

- Extreme weight loss/
thinness
- Fatigue
- Low blood pressure
- Swelling of extremities
- Irregular heart rhythm
- Dizziness/Fainting
- Bluish discoloration of
fingers and toes
- Intolerance to cold
- Thinning, brittle hair
- Brittle nails
- Growth of fine body hair
- Loss of menstrual period
- Bone loss
- Dehydration
- Constipation

Behavioral

- Skipping meals
- Denying hunger
- Eating only "safe" foods
- Adopting eating rituals
such as cutting food into
small bites
- Preparing elaborate meals
for others but not eating
- Excessive exercise
- Frequent/obsessive
weighing
- Frequent/obsessive
checking own reflection
- Preoccupation with food
- Use of laxatives, diuretics,
or diet aides
- Going to the bathroom
immediately after eating

Emotional

- Apathy
- Social withdrawal
- Perfectionism
- Irritability
- Depression
- Slow thinking or confusion
- Insomnia

-Refusal to maintain a body weight at or above the minimum normal weight for age and height
-Intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat despite being underweight
-Denial of seriousness of underweight status or distorted image of physical appearance
-In women, the absence of at least 3 consecutive menstrual cycles
American Psychiatric Association diagnosis of AN