
WHAT TO LOOK FOR

INFORMATION FOR ENCOURAGERS

Eating disorders come in all shapes and sizes, and while no two look alike, it is important to know the common signs that can be seen in individuals who are struggling.

Eating disorders can impact all aspects of health, emotional, social, and physical. The list below has been adapted from NEDA's website to reflect how an eating disorder can affect all aspects of an individual's health.

COMMON SIGNS OF AN EATING DISORDER

Physical

- Noticeable fluctuations in weight, either up or down
- Gastrointestinal complaints (e.g. constipation, acid reflux)
- Menstrual irregularities
- Difficulties concentrating
- Dizziness, especially upon standing
- Feeling cold all the time
- Sleep problems
- Cuts across the top of finger joints (a result of inducing vomiting)
- Dental problems, such as enamel erosion, cavities, and tooth sensitivity
- Dry skin and hair, as well as brittle nails
- Swelling around area of salivary glands
- Fine hair on body (known as lanugo)
- Muscle weakness
- Impaired immune functioning

Social

- Withdrawal from usual friends and activities
- Changes in friend groups
- Increased internal and external dialogue related to food and bodies
- Attempts to hide eating disorder behaviors
- Denial of problematic eating patterns

Emotional

- Preoccupation with weight, food, calories, carbohydrates, fat grams, and dieting
- Refusal to eat certain foods, progressing to restrictions against whole categories of food
- Appears uncomfortable eating around others
- Food rituals (e.g. eats only a particular food or food group, excessive chewing, doesn't allow foods to touch)
- Reduced meal sizes or skipping meals entirely
- New food practices, such as cutting out entire food groups (no sugar, no carbs, no dairy, vegetarianism/veganism)
- Extreme concern with body size and shape
- Frequent checking in the mirror for perceived flaws in appearance
- Extreme mood swings