



## Children's Health

# Eating Disorders

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE THEM

### **BULIMIA NERVOSA**

This disorder is often referred to as the binge and purge disorder. Bulimics consume large amounts of food in a short time and then self-induce vomiting and/or abuse laxatives because of their fear of gaining weight. They're convinced that purging is the only way to avoid obesity. Bulimics are prone to depression and often progress into anorexia.

### **SIGNS OF BULIMIA**

- broken blood vessels in the eyes
- swollen saliva glands
- puffy area below the corners of the mouth
- teeth that are prone to cavities and erosion
- diseased gums
- rashes and pimples on the skin
- preoccupation with food
- abuse of laxatives, diet pills, emetics and diuretics
- compulsive exercising
- distorted body image
- confused or slowed thinking



### **ANOREXIA NERVOSA**

This is a disorder of severe self-imposed dieting. It most often affects teenage girls. They may believe that emaciation is attractive. They most often have a distorted self-image,

seeing themselves as fat when they're actually very thin. When weight decreases to 60 percent below



normal, the risk of death is increased significantly.

### **SIGNS OF ANOREXIA**

- major weight loss from excessive and continuous dieting
- emaciation
- rapid weight loss
- infrequent or absent menstruation
- distorted body image
- dry skin covered with fine hair
- loss of normal scalp hair
- cold and swollen feet and hands
- confused or slow thinking
- compulsive exercising
- eventual impaired ability to exercise

### **IS YOUR CHILD AT RISK?**

Eating disorders most often impact teenage middle-class girls. They feel a tremendous pressure to fit into a picture of perfection. Diagnosing and treating eating disorders can be very difficult, in part, because the patient and the family may deny that there's a problem.

### **TREATMENT**

Psychotherapy, diet counseling and counseling for parents is recommended for anorexia and bulimia. Both are treated with behavior modification and psychotherapy, sometimes along with antidepressants. If weight loss or bingeing and purging are out of control, hospitalization for both disorders may be necessary.