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ANOREXIA NERVOSA

Definition

An emotional/mental health disorder characterized by an intense fear of gaining weight, lack of self-esteem and distorted body image which results in self-induced starvation.

Incidence

- 1-4% of women between the ages of 11-35 yrs have anorexia
- Over 90% of individuals affected are female

Onset

- Peak times of onset are at age 12-13 and age 17.

Risk Factors



- Family or personal history of alcoholism, depression or eating disorders
- Family dysfunction
- Early puberty or tallness
- Being a perfectionist and low self-esteem
- Socio-cultural pressures to be thin
- Major transitions in life (i.e., college, marriage)

Characteristics

- Underweight: <85% of normal weight
- Preoccupations with food and weight
- Body image distortion
- Lack of assertiveness
- Denial of illness
- Secrecy about eating or dieting
- Shopping or cooking for others
- Over activity or fatigue; excessive exercise
- Sleep disruption
- Feeling cold
- Occasionally overeats & purges

Medical Consequences



- Cessation of menstrual cycle
- Low estrogen leading to osteoporosis
- Lower body temperature
- Low blood pressure and slower pulse
- Smaller, weaker heart
- Growth of fine body hair (lanugo)
- Bluish hands and feet (acrocyanosis)
- Constipation, bloating, abdominal pain
- Slowed metabolism and slower reflexes
- Loss of muscle mass
- Low heart rate
- Sleeping difficulty
- Stringy hair, brittle nails
- Irritability/withdrawal



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