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COMPULSIVE EATING

Definition

An emotional/mental health disorder characterized by uncontrollable eating which is followed by feelings of guilt, remorse and shame. It is eating without regard to the biologic need of the body for food.

Incidence

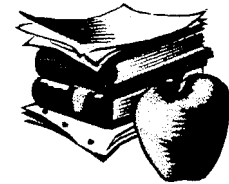
- Up to 40% of people in weight loss programs or on a diet.
- Up to 25% of females and 5% of college aged men
- Over 80% of individuals affected are female
- It is thought to be the most common eating disorder

Onset

- Any age

Risk Factors

- History of dieting
- Family dysfunction
- Stress
- Major life transitions (i.e., college, marriage, new job, divorce)
- Low self-esteem
- Sociocultural Pressures to be thin



Characteristics

- Preoccupation with food and weight
- Uses food to cope with unpleasant emotions (i.e., anger, guilt, boredom, etc.)
- Yo-yo dieting and weight fluctuation
- Binge eating or overeating (i.e., eating faster than normal, not tasting food, sneak eating)
- Depression and isolation
- Any shape or size
- Lack of assertiveness
- May constantly need food nearby
- Often feels out of control when eating
- Feels high after overeating, followed by feelings of guilt
- Frequent weight fluctuations and inability to maintain a consistent, natural weight



Medical Consequences

- Slowed metabolism
- Recurrent weight fluctuations
- Increased risk of high blood pressure, heart attack or stroke if obese
- Increased risk of diabetes



A project of the Community Health Promotion Fund, N.S. Dept. of Health and the Central Regional Health Board, Province of N.S.