

## Eating Disorders

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heart attack, other medical complications or suicide. Anorexia involves an extreme weight loss, at least 15% below the person's normal body weight. Many people with anorexia look extremely thin to others, but continue to see themselves as overweight. Food and weight become obsessions. Many refuse to eat in front of others. Some may use extreme exercise routines to assist in keeping off the weight.

Two to three percent of young women develop bulimia nervosa, a pattern of excessive overeating followed by vomiting or other purging behaviors to control their weight. Many people with bulimia abuse laxatives or diuretics or exercise excessively. Most people with this problem "binge and purge" in secret and their body weight may be near normal, so they can hide their problem from others.

Another eating disorder that is similar to bulimia is binge eating disorder. In this disorder a person eats huge amounts of

food, but does not purge his or her body of the excess food. Most people with this disorder are extremely overweight, and have a history of weight changes up or down. Binge eating disorder is found in about 2% of people of all ages, more often in women than men.

Medical complications of eating disorders range from mild anemia, to dehydration, to loss of monthly menstrual periods, to heart failure. Many of those who suffer from eating disorders also suffer from depression, anxiety, and other illnesses.

Most people with eating disorders share certain personality traits, and eating behaviors seem to develop as a way of handling stress and anxiety. Genetic factors may be involved in the development of eating disorders. Female relatives are most often affected. Behavioral and environmental factors may also play a role. Although most victims of anorexia and bulimia are teenage and young adult women, men and older women can be affected. Anorexia and bulimia are most often found in Caucasians, but other racial ethnic groups

are affected. Research is continuing into the role of brain chemicals in eating disorders.

Eating disorders can be treated most successfully when found early. Many people deny having a problem, and therefore do not get help until their bodies have been seriously affected. Treatment may involve outpatient procedures, but some need hospital care. Some form of psychotherapy is usually needed in combination with medical treatment and sometimes medications.

Treatment can save the life of someone with an eating disorder. Friends, relatives, teachers, doctors and nurses can all play an important role in helping someone with an eating disorder find help and then stay with a treatment program. Ignoring the problem will only contribute to the development of a more serious condition. For more information on eating disorders call your local hospital or health department.

\*This information was taken from NIH publication no. 94-3477, US Dept. of Health and Human Services.

## Career Corner

I would like to welcome you to Wilkes Community College. Even though you have made the decision to attend college, you may still be undecided about a career direction. Choosing a career can be both exciting and rewarding if you approach the process in a step by step manner. The four major steps in career planning are as follows:

### 1. Who am I?

Learn about your interests, abilities, values, and personality

### 2. Where am I going?

Learn about several occupations that relate to what you have learned about yourself?

### 3. How am I going to get there?

Take the courses and training programs

to help you prepare

### 4. What's next?

Evaluate, update skills, keep networking

Career planning is a lifelong project of becoming more aware of yourself and more aware of the changes in the work world. The career planning process can work to your best interest when you take it step by step.

For assistance in developing a career plan which may include the use of career guidance inventories, software, and information library, contact me at 838-6147, Room 234, Thompson Hall to arrange an appointment.

**Cathy Annas**

**Career Counselor/Student Services**

