



Rethink
Mental
Illness.

What are eating disorders?

You have probably heard of the words “anorexia” and “bulimia” – they are often mentioned in magazines and the media, often when talking about the appearance of a film or music star who seems to have lost a lot of weight or to be obsessed with being slim.

Anorexia and bulimia are the names often used in a shorthand way to refer to two serious eating disorders – anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa which can lead to a person having serious and extreme problems with eating to the point that their lives can be at risk.

In these disorders, people use food (or the denial of it) as a way of coping with painful feelings... it can be easier to have a feeling of control over what you eat rather than deal with the feelings that are bothering you.

Eating problems and disorders can cause a range of emotional and physical problems for a person. They may have distorted ideas about their body (its size and shape) and they may feel bad or guilty if at some point, they put on weight.



Other problems that can result from a lack of food can include:

- Difficulties sleeping.
- Feeling cold.
- Having mood swings.
- Feeling tired.
- Tooth decay, dehydration and poor skin.

There are some important differences between anorexia and bulimia – people with bulimia tend to keep to a more steady weight but to binge eat. This can mean that people with bulimia are more easily missed. In both cases, it is really important that a person gets professional help and support.

Find out more

Visit our website
www.rethink.org/youngpeople

Beat provides a comprehensive range of information on eating disorders including sections specifically for young people and a directory of local support services.

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For further information
 on Rethink Mental Illness
 Phone 0300 5000 927
 Email info@rethink.org

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