

Eating disorders

Opinion

Eating disorder is not a new term for all of us especially with the increasing global health burden. According to the 2003 statistics, eating disorders affect up to 70million individuals worldwide without any gender discrimination.¹ Especially when it comes to adolescents and young individuals because they are more concerned about their body image. According to the epidemiological studies, the incidence of eating disorders has increased over the last 50years.² There are biological, psychological, social, cultural and family factors that have a deep impact upon developing eating disorders while media influences further worsens the situation.

Which behavior risks the most for disordered eating?

The most common behavior that could lead to disordered eating is dieting.³ In addition to that low self-esteem or poor body image further knocks out the situation when the 'want zero size' or 'no more skinny' behavior drags the person to fad diets or yoyo diets.

The consequences of eating disorders

The consequences of eating disorders could be fatal if left untreated. Some of them include:

- a. Extreme weight loss that could ultimately lead to the loss or irregularity of menstrual cycle and therefore infertility in women
- b. Amenorrhea
- c. Electrolyte imbalances
- d. Muscle loss, weakness and fatigue
- e. Dehydration that could lead to kidney failure
- f. Low bone density or osteoporosis
- g. heart rate that is abnormally slow and low blood pressure
- h. Potential for gastric rupture during periods of bingeing
- i. Inflammation of esophagus from frequent vomiting
- j. Peptic ulcers and pancreatitis
- k. High blood pressure
- l. High cholesterol and triglyceride levels
- m. Type II diabetes mellitus

The Management of eating disorders

The primary therapeutic goal for anorexia nervosa is the

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normalization of body weight, and for other binge eating disorders, is the normalization of eating behaviors. This is more like psychological counseling and a big fat support from family and friends. There are others factors that influence the outcomes of eating disorders management

- i. Motivation to change
- ii. Short length of illness
- iii. An early diagnosed eating disorder
- iv. Acceptance to weight restoration

Once the health problems are under control, a long term recovery plan should be taken under consideration.

In these circumstances, the role of a nutritionist or a dietician is to incorporate healthy behaviors into the individual's everyday lifestyle. This will take a gradual period of time and ultimately will develop a healthier relationship with the eating patterns.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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