



Eating Patterns

Normal ➤ *Dysfunctional* ➤ *Eating Disorders*

Normal eating patterns vary from person-to-person and from day-to-day. It is often hard to tell when this pattern becomes dysfunctional.

People tend to bounce from normal eating to dysfunctional eating and back to normal. The concern is when someone stays in a dysfunctional pattern for long periods, crossing over into an eating disorder may occur.

Eating patterns can be divided into three categories.

Normal Eating

- 3 meals and snacks;
- eat for hunger;
- eat for pleasure;
- eat at social occasions;
- weight is healthy with only small changes.

Dysfunctional Eating

- irregular eating;
- eat for body image;
- eat for pleasure, stress, loneliness, anger and boredom;
- weight may be unstable;
- think a lot about food and weight;
- decreased social contact;
- may eat very differently compared to pattern when a child;
- may have a poor self-concept.

Eating Disorders

Eating disorders can be divided into two main types. Basic characteristics of those who practice:

➤ **Bulimia Nervosa** are:

- ⊃ eat very large amounts very fast;
- ⊃ may use laxatives in excess;
- ⊃ may vomit after eating, which may cause dental problems;
- ⊃ feel worthless;
- ⊃ may exercise excessively;
- ⊃ think about food and weight very often;
- ⊃ may practice rumination (chewing and spitting out food).

➤ **Anorexia Nervosa** are:

- ⊃ restrict food intake severely;
- ⊃ may exercise excessively;
- ⊃ have excessive weight loss, appear *very* thin but think they are fat;
- ⊃ may fast for non-religious reasons;
- ⊃ think about food and weight very often;
- ⊃ may practice rumination (chewing and spitting out food).

If you are in a dysfunctional eating pattern or are engaging in an eating disorder, *see your health care provider*. He/she can steer you to someone who can help.

If you know someone who practices dysfunctional eating or an eating disorder, what can you do?

- ✓ stay out of her food and weight life;
- ✓ talk about feelings;
- ✓ suggest professional help to deal with relationships;
- ✓ listen.

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