



National Eating Disorders Association

**NATIONAL
EATING DISORDERS
AWARENESS
WEEK** FEB 21-27

RECOGNIZING SYMPTOMS IN PATIENTS

**EARLY INTERVENTION AND
SCREENING CAN SAVE LIVES.**



**3 MINUTES
CAN SAVE A LIFE**

GET SCREENED. GET HELP. GET HEALTHY.

Eating Disorders and Healthcare Professionals

Healthcare professionals are in a unique position to recognize and offer assistance regarding a patient's eating and weight concerns. Identifying at-risk patients and intervening early can improve treatment outcomes and save lives. Learn more about eating disorders, incorporate screenings into your practice and educate others on eating disorders signs and symptoms.

What are eating disorders?

Eating disorders (EDs) are real, complex medical and psychiatric illnesses that can have serious consequences for health, productivity and relationships. They are caused by both genetic and environmental factors. EDs are bio-psycho-social diseases; they are not a fad, phase or lifestyle choice.

In the United States, 20 million women and 10 million men suffer from a clinically significant eating disorder at some time in their life. Eating disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder and OSFED (other specified feeding or eating disorder).

People struggling with an eating disorder typically become obsessed with food, body image and/or weight. These disorders can become very serious, chronic and life-threatening if not recognized and treated appropriately. The earlier a person seeks treatment, the greater the likelihood of physical and emotional recovery.

What are the warning signs of an eating disorder?

- In general, behaviors and attitudes indicating that weight loss, dieting and control of food are becoming primary concerns.
- Evidence of binge eating, including disappearance of large amounts of food in short periods of time or finding wrappers and containers indicating the consumption of large amounts of food.
- Evidence of purging behaviors, including frequent trips to the bathroom after meals, signs and/or smells of vomiting or presence of wrappers or packages of laxatives or diuretics.
- Excessive, rigid exercise regimen—despite weather, fatigue, illness or injury, the compulsive need to “burn off” calories taken in.
- Withdrawal from usual friends and activities.

How can eating disorders affect your patients?

- Eating disorders can affect an employee's cognitive functioning because of poor nutrition and coexisting mental disorders.
- As with many illnesses, eating disorders have serious health effects that, gone untreated, may lead to lost productivity and long-term medical problems

**3 MINUTES CAN SAVE A LIFE
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Early intervention saves lives.
NEDA's online eating disorders screening
takes only three minutes. Make this
screening tool available for patients:
screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/NEDA.

- Medical complications of eating disorders may include, but are not limited to:

Anorexia Nervosa	Bulimia Nervosa	Binge Eating Disorder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Heart failure ▪ Osteoporosis ▪ Muscle loss and weakness ▪ Kidney failure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Heart failure ▪ Gastric rupture ▪ Tooth decay ▪ Peptic ulcers and pancreatitis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Heart disease ▪ Type II diabetes mellitus ▪ Gallbladder disease ▪ High cholesterol

What can a healthcare professional do?

Educate Yourself

- Anorexia and bulimia are the best-known eating disorders, but you should also be aware of the signs and symptoms of other eating disorders, including BED, OSFED and ARFID.
- Eating disorders courses and conferences may offer continuing education credits relevant to your field. Find ED conferences at www.myNEDA.org/find-event. You may also find relevant online continuing education courses.

DID YOU KNOW?

Help-seeking decreases significantly when people are not aware of the options available to them.

(Ben-Porath, 2002; Friedman, 2009; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2006; Gould, 2007)

Check Your Messaging

- Provide balanced education about nutrition and physical activity. Encourage general health and wellness rather than focusing on weight. Over-emphasis on weight can be counterproductive for a patient susceptible to body image concerns and disordered eating.
- Take a look at your office, considering charts, magazines and dietary warnings on display: what messages are you sending about weight?

Provide Resources

- Provide resources in person: Keep NEDA and Proud2Bme brochures readily available in your office. Consider keeping a list of local eating disorders specialists available for your patients (www.myNEDA.org/find-treatment).
- On your webpage, link to the NEDA website (www.myNEDA.org), Proud2Bme (www.Proud2Bme.org) and the online eating disorder screening (screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/NEDA).
- Clearly display contact information for NEDA's Helpline online and in your office:
 - NEDA Information & Referral Helpline: (800) 931-2237
 - NEDA Click to Chat: www.myneda.org/helplinechat
- Provide online and in-person access to NEDA's Toolkits for parents (www.myNEDA.org/parent-toolkit), educators (www.myNEDA.org/educator-toolkit) and coaches and trainers (www.myNEDA.org/coach-trainer).

- NEDA provides resources just for medical professionals. You can find the full listing at www.myNEDA.org/medical-professionals.

Screen & Intervene

- Early intervention and treatment are the best measures to encourage recovery.
- Incorporate questions about eating and exercise behaviors into your patient interviews. Patients may not disclose immediately, but sustained interest may encourage future disclosures. Several screening instruments, such as the SCOFF, can be easily integrated into your practice. You can share NEDA's online screening tool with your patients: screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/NEDA

As a healthcare professional, you are uniquely situated to identify early signs of an eating disorder, and to instill in your patients healthy attitudes about food and weight. Encourage screenings, promote wellness over weight and educate yourself on the signs and symptoms of eating disorders.

Questions? Visit www.myNEDA.org for eating disorders information, resources and treatment options.