

Bulimia Nervosa

Background:

Healthy People 2010 states that “Bulimia nervosa is an eating disorder that involves eating a lot of food (binge eating) and then eliminating it by (purging), whether through self-induced vomiting or through the use of diuretics or other medications.”

In 2006, The National Eating Disorder Association stated three primary factors of bulimia nervosa.

- The first factor being, “regular intake of large amounts of food accompanied by a sense of loss of control over eating behavior (NEDA 2006).”
- The second factor is “regular use of inappropriate compensatory behaviors such as self-induced vomiting, laxative or diuretic abuse, fasting, and/or obsessive or compulsive exercise (NEDA 2006).”
- The third factor is, “extreme concern with body weight and shape (NEDA 2006).”

Causes of Bulimia:

There are many causes of bulimia, for example, bulimia can be caused by stress, uncomfortable emotions, dieting, anger, or sadness.(Womenshealth.gov). “Purging and other actions to prevent weight gain are ways for people with bulimia to feel more in control of their lives and ease stress and anxiety. There is no single known cause of bulimia, but there are some factors that may play a part (Womenshealth.gov).”

Culture- In today’s society, “Women in the U.S. are under constant pressure to fit a certain ideal of beauty. Seeing images of flawless, thin females everywhere makes it hard for women to feel good about their bodies. Men are also feeling pressure to have a perfect body (Womenshealth.gov 2007).”

Families- If bulimia runs in your family, you are more likely to have bulimia (Womenshealth.gov 2007).”

Life changes or stressful events- Bulimia can also be triggered by “traumatic events like rape, as well as stressful things like starting a new job, can lead to bulimia (Womenshealth.gov 2007).”

Personality traits- People with bulimia show signs of low self-esteem, and sometimes feel hopeless. This person may be very moody, and have a hard time controlling impulsive behaviors (Womenshealth.gov 2007).”

Biology- “Genes, hormones, and chemicals in the brain (Womenshealth.gov 2007).”

Warning Signs of Bulimia:

The United States Department of Health and Human Services, and womenshealth.gov, state that “a person with bulimia nervosa will appear to be thin, overweight, or of average weight.”

- “using diet pills, or taking pills to urinate or have a bowel movement (womenshealth.gov 2007).”
- “going to the bathroom all the time after eating to throw up (womenshealth.gov 2007).”
- “exercising a lot, even in bad weather or when hurt or tired (womenshealth.gov 2007).”

Someone with bulimia may show signs of throwing up, such as:

- “swollen cheeks or jaw area (womenshealth.gov 2007).”
- “calluses or scrapes on knuckles (if using fingers to induce vomiting) (womenshealth.gov 2007).”
- “teeth that look clear (womenshealth.gov 2007)”
- “broken blood vessels in the eyes (womenshealth.gov 2007)”

The National Eating Disorder Association states that there are many health consequences of Bulimia Nervosa.

- Electrolyte imbalances that can lead to irregular heartbeats and possibly heart failure and death. Electrolyte imbalance is caused by dehydration and loss of potassium and sodium from the body as a result of purging behaviors. (NEDA 2006)
 - Inflammation and possible rupture of the esophagus from frequent vomiting. (NEDA 2006)
 - Tooth decay and staining from stomach acids released during frequent vomiting. (NEDA 2006)
 - Chronic irregular bowel movements and constipation as a result of laxative abuse. (NEDA 2006)
 - Gastric rupture is an uncommon but possible side effect of binge eating. (NEDA 2006)
- ❖ **Many people believe that bulimia will not affect them in the long run, however that is not true. Pregnancy can also be affected by bulimia. Womenshealth.gov states that “miscarriage, high blood pressure in the mother, early birth, and low birth weight can be results of bulimia.” Also Womenshealth.gov states, “as a result of bulimia, the child is not born alive, or the baby tries to come out feet or bottom first.” “Birth defects, such as blindness or mental retardation are also a result of bulimia (Womenshealth.gov 2007).”**

Bulimia can be treated by:

There are many different kinds of treatment for bulimia such as, “psychotherapy, which includes: Interpersonal psychotherapy, Cognitive-behavioral therapy, family therapy, or seeing a psychiatrist (Psychcentral.com 2007).”

Medication, such as: “Fluoxetine Prozac, or other anti-depressants,” can be used to treat a person with bulimia (Psychcentral.com 2007)

“Self-help programs and books,” are also available for help (Psychcentral.com 2007).

In some cases of bulimia, “hospital based care (including inpatient, partial hospitalization, intensive outpatient and/or residential care in an eating disorders specialty unit or facility“ is sometimes needed (NEDA 2006).

Statement of the Issue:

- Objective 18-5 of Healthy People 2010 states that their goal is “to reduce the relapse rates for persons with eating disorders including anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.”
- According to Healthy People 2010, “Effective short-term treatments exist for this serious mental health problem. When “remission” is defined as being symptom-free of binge eating, and purging for at least 4 weeks, about 25 percent of those in remission, had a relapse in less than 3 months. Around 9 months after remission, fewer than half (49 percent) of the persons remained symptom-free. Risk for relapse seems to drop after 4 years of being symptom-free.”
- “The goals of treatment are to restore physical health and normal eating patterns (Medicinenet.com 2006).”

Epidemiological Picture of Those Affected by Bulimia Nervosa

Many studies show that:

- “Bulimia nervosa affects 1-2% of adolescent and young adult women (AED 2007).”
- “Approximately 80% of bulimia nervosa patients are female (Gidwani, 1997. NEDA 2006).”
- “2-3% of adolescents have bulimia nervosa (EDC 2007)”
- “Bulimia nervosa is frequently associated with symptoms of depression and changes in social adjustment (EDC 2007).”
- “The average age of onset for bulimia is 18 years, but it occurs in children as young as 9 and adults into their mid-40s (WHC 2007).”
- “Approximately 50 percent of bulimia sufferers recover, while 30 percent show some improvement and 20 percent continue to be fully bulimic (AED 2007).”
- “It is estimated that 200,000 to 300,000 Canadian women aged 13 to 40 have anorexia nervosa and twice as many have bulimia (Anecollins.com 2007).”
- “Nationwide, 12.3% of high school students had gone without eating for 24 hours or more to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight (SADD 2007).”

Solutions to the Problem:

- **The Academy for Eating Disorders**
<http://www.aedweb.org>
 - “The Academy for Eating Disorders is a global, multidisciplinary professional organization that provides cutting-edge professional training and education, inspires new developments in eating disorders research, prevention, and clinical treatments, and is the international source for state-of-the-art information in the field of eating disorders (aedweb.org).”
 - “Promote the effective treatment and care of patients with eating disorders and associated disorders (aedweb.org).”
- **National Eating Disorders Association**
<http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org>
 - “The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) is the largest not-for-profit

organization in the United States working to prevent eating disorders and provide treatment referrals to those suffering from anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorder and those concerned with body image and weight issues (NEDA 2006).”

- The National Eating Disorders Association states that “they develop prevention programs for a wide range of audiences, publish and distribute educational materials as well as operate the nation's first toll-free eating disorders information and referral helpline.”

- **The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**
<http://www.hhs.gov/index.html>
 - “The Department of Health and Human Services is the United States government's principal agency for protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services, especially for those who are least able to help themselves (hhs.gov).”
 - **HHS** “represents almost a quarter of all federal outlays, and it administers more grant dollars than all other federal agencies combined. HHS' Medicare program is the nation's largest health insurer, handling more than 1 billion claims per year. Medicare and Medicaid together provide health care insurance for one in four Americans (hhs.gov).”

Internet Resources:

- The National Institute of Mental Health
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

NIMH states that they “fund research by scientists across the country as well as in NIMH studies in the internal research program. Through its extramural program, NIMH supports more than 2,000 research grants and contracts at universities and other institutions across the country and overseas.”

- Woman's Health Channel
<http://www.womenshealthchannel.com/>

The Women's Health Channel is “ developed and monitored by board-certified physicians; the **women's health** channel provides comprehensive, trustworthy information about conditions that affect women (womenshealthchannel.com).”

- The Eating Disorders Coalition
<http://www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org>

Eating Disorders Coalition stated that their mission is to “advance the federal recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority. EDC also has four Federal Policy goals: Increase resources for research, education, prevention, and improved training. Promote federal support for improved access to care. Promote the national awareness of eating disorders as a public health problem. Promote initiatives that support the healthy development of children.”

- Healthy Place Eating Disorders Community
http://www.healthyplace.com/communities/Eating_Disorders/index.asp

HPEDC claims that they “offer information and support for those people who have or have not

already been diagnosed with anorexia, binge eating, and bulimia.”

- SAMHSA’s National Mental Health Information Center
<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases/>

SAMHSA states that they “offer mental health information related to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) research, programs, policies, and media campaigns and highlights the latest research findings and policy efforts.”

- The Center for Counseling and Health Resources, Inc.
<http://www.aplaceofhope.com>

The Center for Counseling and Health Resources, Inc. states that they “treat a variety of mental and emotional issues such as addictions, depression, eating disorders, and relationship issues (aplaceofhope.com).”

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Back to Fact Sheet Directory	http://www.bettyjung.net/Pch202fs.htm