

Healthy Eating Tip of January 2012

Eating Disorders



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With the beginning of a new year come New Year's resolutions, and food and dieting are on many people's minds. This website from University of Michigan Health System Patient Food and Nutrition Services is designed to raise awareness about eating disorders and provide ways to form a healthy self-image in order to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Contributing Factors

Eating disorders are extremely complex conditions that may develop due to a combination of long-standing psychological, interpersonal, social, and biological factors. Researchers are still learning about the underlying causes of these emotionally and physically damaging conditions. However, some of the general issues that can contribute to the development of eating disorders are already known and accepted. Because so much is still unknown, there is a large difference of opinion among experts and in literature, so please explore this topic further.

Eating disorders may begin with preoccupations with food and weight, but they are most often about much more than that. People with eating disorders are often using food and the control of food to try to compensate for feelings and emotions that may otherwise be overwhelming. However, these behaviors will ultimately become even more damaging to the individual.

Psychological:

- Low self-esteem
- Feelings of inadequacy or lack of control in life
- Depression, anxiety, anger, or loneliness

Interpersonal:

- Troubled or unhealthy personal relationships
- Difficulty expressing emotions and feelings
- History of being teased about weight or size
- History of physical or sexual abuse

Biological:

- Scientists are still researching possible biochemical or biological causes of eating disorders. In some individuals with eating disorders, certain chemicals in the brain that control hunger, appetite, and digestion have been found to be unbalanced. The exact implications of this are still being investigated.
- Eating disorders often run in families. Current research indicates that there may be significant genetic contributions to eating disorders.

Social:

- Cultural pressures that promote being thin or place emphasis on having the “perfect body”
- Narrow definitions of beauty
- Valuing people based on physical appearance and not on inner strengths and qualities

Healthy Body Image

What is body image?

- How you see yourself when you look in a mirror or picture yourself in your mind. This image comes both from self-observation and noting the reactions of others.
- How you feel about your physical body (height, shape, and weight)
- Beliefs you have about your appearance, including memories, assumptions, and generalizations
- How comfortable you feel in your body, not just about the way your body looks. Your body language reveals how you truly feel about yourself.

People with positive body image are less likely to develop an eating disorder and are less likely to suffer from feelings of depression, isolation, low self-esteem, and obsessions with weight loss.



Listen To Your Body!

Eat what you want, when you are truly hungry. Stop when you are full.

And eat exactly what appeals to you. Do this instead of any diet, and you're likely to maintain a healthy weight and avoid eating disorders.

Every Body Is Different!

Keys to an ideal body:

- Treat your body with respect
- Give it enough rest
- Fuel it with a variety of foods
- Exercise moderately

Resist the pressure to judge yourself and others based on weight, shape, or size.
Respect people based on the qualities of their character and accomplishments, rather than just because of their appearance.

Positive Body Image

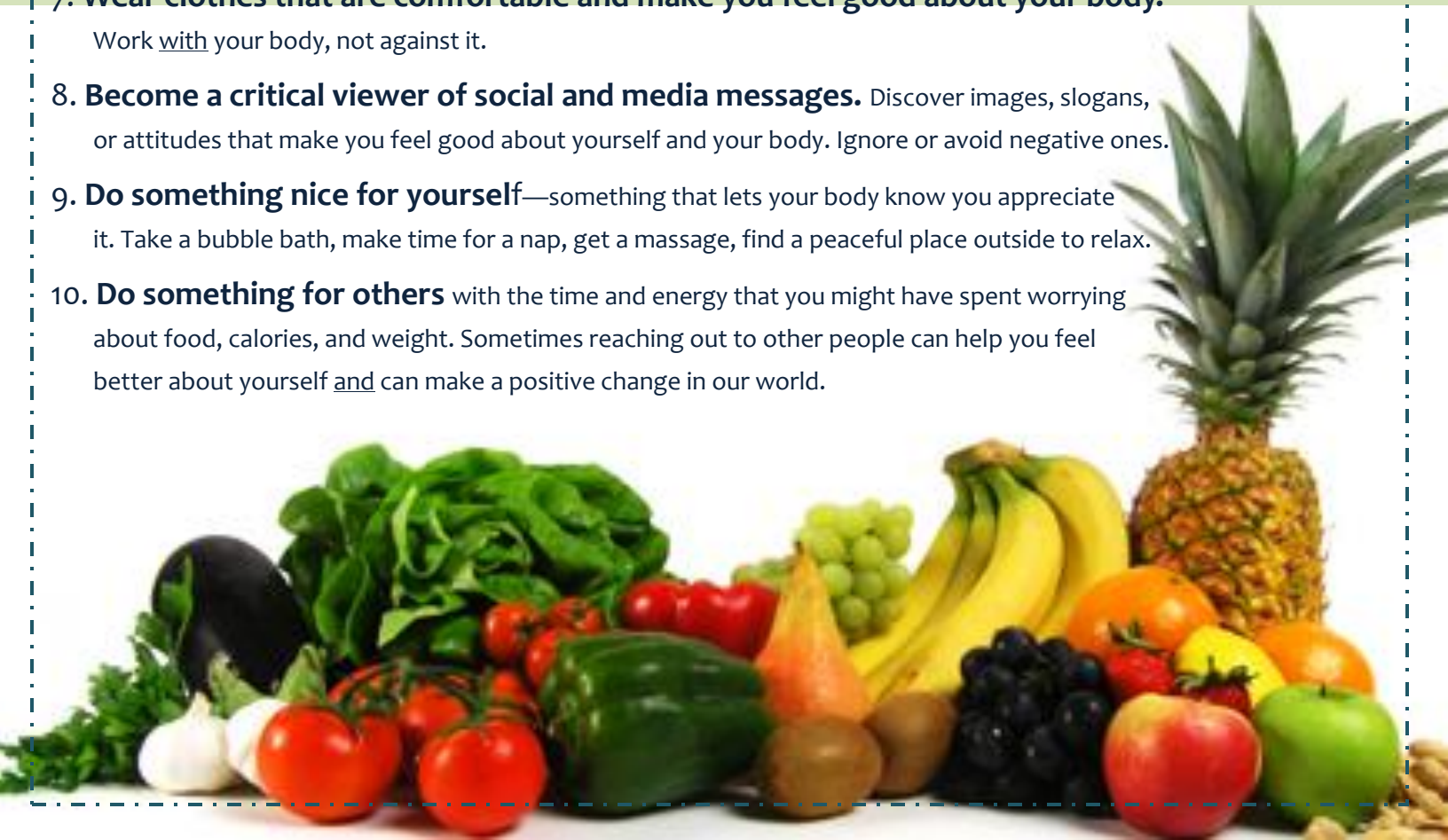
- + A true, clear perception of your shape—you see the various parts of your body as they really are.
- + You celebrate and appreciate your natural body shape and you understand that a person's physical appearance says very little about their character and value as a person.
- + You feel proud and accepting of your unique body and refuse to spend an unreasonable amount of time worrying about food, weight, and calories.
- + You feel comfortable and confident in your body.

Negative Body Image

- A distorted perception of your shape—you perceive parts of your body unlike they really are.
- You are convinced that you are not attractive and that your body size or shape is a sign of personal failure.
- You feel ashamed, self-conscious, and anxious about your body.
- You feel uncomfortable and awkward in your body.

10 Steps To Positive Body Image

- 1. Appreciate all that your body can do.** Celebrate all of the amazing things your body does for you—running, dancing, breathing, laughing, dreaming, etc.
- 2. Keep a top-10 list of things you like about yourself**—things that aren't at all related to what you look like. Read your list often, and add to it as you find more things to like about you.
- 3. Remind yourself that true beauty is more than skin deep.** When you feel good about who you are, you carry yourself with a sense of confidence, self-acceptance, and openness that makes you beautiful. Beauty is a state of mind, not a state of your body.
- 4. Look at yourself as a whole person**—don't focus on specific body parts. See yourself as you want others to see you—as a whole person.
- 5. Surround yourself with positive people.** It's easier to feel good about yourself and your body when those around you are supportive and recognize how important it is to like yourself as you are.
- 6. Shut down the negative voices in your head.** Overcome them with positive thoughts. Next time you start to tear yourself down, build yourself up with a few quick affirmations.
- 7. Wear clothes that are comfortable and make you feel good about your body.** Work with your body, not against it.
- 8. Become a critical viewer of social and media messages.** Discover images, slogans, or attitudes that make you feel good about yourself and your body. Ignore or avoid negative ones.
- 9. Do something nice for yourself**—something that lets your body know you appreciate it. Take a bubble bath, make time for a nap, get a massage, find a peaceful place outside to relax.
- 10. Do something for others** with the time and energy that you might have spent worrying about food, calories, and weight. Sometimes reaching out to other people can help you feel better about yourself and can make a positive change in our world.



Anorexia Nervosa

What are the symptoms?

- Resistance to maintaining body weight at or above a healthy weight for age and height
- Extreme fear of weight gain or being “fat,” even though underweight
- Incorrect view of weight or shape, undue influence of weight or shape on self-evaluation, or denial of the seriousness of low body weight
- Loss of menstrual periods in girls and women post-puberty

What are the health consequences?

- Abnormally slow heart rate and low blood pressure, which increase risk for heart failure
- Osteoporosis, causing dry, brittle bones
- Muscle loss and weakness
- Severe dehydration, which increases risk for kidney failure
- Fainting, fatigue, and overall weakness
- Dry hair, dry skin, hair loss

This is a serious, potentially life-threatening disease disorder characterized by self-starvation and excessive weight loss.

What are the warning signs?

- Extreme weight loss
- Preoccupation with weight, food, calories, fat, and dieting
- Refusal to eat certain foods, progressing to exclusion of entire food groups (for example, no carbohydrates)
- Frequent comments about feeling “fat” despite underweight status or weight loss
- Anxiety about gaining weight
- Denial of hunger
- Development of food rituals (for example, eating foods in certain orders, excessive chewing, rearranging food on a plate)
- Consistent excuses to avoid situations involving food
- Extreme exercise regimen with no regard for weather, fatigue, illness, or injury
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Any indication that weight loss, dieting, and control of food are taking priority over other aspects of life

More...

- About 90-95% of anorexia nervosa sufferers are girls and women
- Anorexia nervosa is one of the most common psychiatric diagnoses in young women
- 5-20% of individuals struggling with anorexia nervosa will die from the disorder. The probability of death increases with the length of the condition
- Anorexia nervosa has one of the highest death rates of any mental health condition
- Anorexia nervosa typically appears in early to mid-adolescence



Bulimia Nervosa

This is a serious, potentially life-threatening disease disorder characterized by a cycle of binge eating and purging behaviors designed to undo or compensate for the effects of bingeing.

What are the symptoms?

- Regular intake of large amounts of food with a sense of loss of control over eating behavior
- Regular use of inappropriate compensatory behaviors such as self-induced vomiting, laxative abuse, fasting, or excessive exercise
- Extreme concern with body weight or shape

What are the health consequences?

- Electrolyte imbalances that can result in irregular heartbeats and possibly heart failure and death. This is caused by dehydration and loss of potassium and sodium from the body as a result of purging
- Inflammation and possible rupture of the esophagus due to frequent vomiting
- Tooth decay and staining from stomach acid due to frequent vomiting
- Chronic irregular bowel movements and constipation due to laxative abuse
- Gastric rupture is uncommon, but can be a side effect of binge eating

What are the warning signs?

- Evidence of binge eating, including disappearance of large amounts of food in a short amount of time or wrappers or containers indicating consumption of a large amount of food
- Evidence of purging behaviors, including frequent trips to the bathroom after meals, signs of vomiting, or indications of laxative use
- Extreme exercise regimen with no regard for weather, fatigue, illness, or injury
- Unusual swelling of the cheeks or jaw area
- Calluses on the backs of hands or knuckles from self-induced vomiting
- Stained or discolored teeth
- Changes in life schedule to make time for binge-and-purge sessions
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Any indication that weight loss, dieting, and control of food are taking priority over other aspects of life

More...

- People struggling with bulimia nervosa usually appear to be of average body weight
- About 80% of bulimia nervosa patients are female
- Many people struggling with bulimia nervosa realize that their behaviors are unusual and may be dangerous to their health
- Bulimia nervosa is frequently associated with symptoms of depression and changes in social adjustment

Binge Eating Disorder

(Compulsive Overeating)

This is a type of eating disorder not otherwise specified and is characterized by frequent binge eating without the use of compensatory purging behaviors to counter the binge eating.

What are the symptoms?

- Frequent episodes of eating large amounts of food over short periods of time
- Feeling out of control over eating behavior
- Feeling ashamed or disgusted by the behavior
- Eating even when not hungry
- Eating alone or in secret

What are the health consequences?

- Most commonly the ones associated with clinical obesity, including:
 - High blood pressure
 - High cholesterol
 - Heart disease
 - Diabetes mellitus
 - Gallbladder disease

More...

- 1-5% of the general population is estimated to have binge eating disorder
- About 60% of people struggling with binge eating disorder are female, 40% are male
- People who struggle with binge eating disorder can be of normal or heavier than average weight
- Binge eating disorder is often associated with symptoms of depression
- People struggling with binge eating disorder often express distress, shame, and guilt over their eating behaviors

Athletes

Information for Coaches, Parents, and Teammates

Contributors to Body Dissatisfaction:

Social influences
Performance Anxiety
Self-Appraisal



Benefits of Organized Sports:

Improved Self-Esteem
Physical Activity
Improved Body Image
Teamwork and Sportsmanship

Protective Factors for Athletes

- Positive, person-oriented coaching style rather than performance-oriented coaching style
- Social influence and support from teammates with healthy attitudes towards size and shape
- Coaches who emphasize factors that contribute to personal success such as motivation and enthusiasm

Risk Factors for Athletes

- Sports that emphasize appearance or weight requirements (gymnastics, diving, bodybuilding, wrestling)
- Sports that focus on an individual rather than on a team (gymnastics, running, figure skating, dance, diving)
- Endurance sports (running, swimming)
- Inaccurate belief that lower body weight will improve performance
- Training for a sport since childhood or being an elite athlete
- Low self-esteem, family dysfunction, families with eating disorders, chronic dieting, history of physical/sexual abuse, social pressures to be thin, other traumatic life experiences
- Coaches who focus only on success and performance rather than on the athlete as a whole person

The Female Athlete Triad:

1. Disordered eating
2. Loss of menstrual periods
3. Osteoporosis

Together these create serious health risks that may be life-threatening. Any female athlete may develop this, but adolescents are most at risk because of active biological changes and growth spurts, peer and social pressures, and rapidly changing life circumstances that go along with teenage years.

Prevention

Basic Principles

- Remember that eating disorders are serious and complex problems. They are not just pleas for attention or obsessions with food. Eating disorders arise from a variety of physical, emotional, and social issues, all of which need to be addressed for effective prevention and treatment.
- Eating disorders affect more than just women and girls. Males who are preoccupied with shape and weight can also develop eating disorders as well as dangerous shape control practices like steroid use. In addition, males play an important role in prevention. The objectification and other forms of mistreatment of women contribute directly to two underlying issues in an eating disorder: obsession with appearance and body dissatisfaction.
- Prevention efforts may fail or encourage disordered eating if they focus only on warning the public about the signs, symptoms, and dangers of eating disorders. They must also address the issues with our cultural obsession with thinness, the roles of men and women in our society, and the development of people's self-esteem and self-respect in a variety of areas that go beyond physical appearance.
- Whenever possible, prevention programs should be coordinated with opportunities for participants to speak confidentially with a trained expert in the field of eating disorders.

What Should I Say? --Tips for talking to a friend who may be struggling

If you are worried about your friend's eating behaviors or attitudes, it is important to express your concerns in a loving and supportive way. It is also necessary to discuss your worries early on, rather than waiting until your friend has endured many of the damaging physical and emotional effects of eating disorders. In a private and relaxed setting, talk to your friend in a calm and caring way about the specific things you have seen or felt that have caused you to worry.

What to Say – Step by Step

1. **Set a time to talk.** Discuss your concerns in private, and in a caring, supportive way. Make sure you will be free of distractions.
2. **Communicate your concerns.** Share memories of specific times you felt concerned and explain that you think these things indicate that there could be a problem that needs professional attention.
3. **Ask your friend to explore these concerns.** Encourage them to find a health professional who can help them, and if you feel comfortable, help them make an appointment or accompany them on their first visit.
4. **Avoid conflicts or a battle of wills.** If your friend refuses to acknowledge that there is a problem, restate your feelings and the reasons for them, and stay open as an active listener.
5. **Avoid placing shame, blame, or guilt.** Use "I" rather than "you" statements.
6. **Avoid giving simple solutions.** Eating disorders are complex; these will not be beneficial.
7. **Express your continued support.** Remind your friend that you care and want them happy and healthy.

Win A Prize!

For more information on eating disorders, stop by the Healthy Eating Tip of the Month bulletin board in the UH Cafeteria.

While you're there, take the time to enter to win this Jillian Michaels yoga workout DVD and a yoga mat.



This page was compiled by:

Lydia Litwiller
Dietetic Intern

For more information, please contact:

Patient Food and Nutrition Services
Nutrition Counseling Center
UH Room # 2A-237 (second floor)
1500 E. Medical Center Drive Ann Arbor, MI 48109
(734-936-7527)

For More Information...

More information is available on these websites:

<http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org>

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/eating-disorders/complete-index.shtml>

<http://www.eatright.org/Public/>

http://www.aedweb.org/Eating_Disorders_Information.htm

<http://www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org/index.htm>

