

Dangerous Eating Disorder: Anorexia Nervosa

By Michael Russell

Perhaps one of the most dangerous eating disorders is anorexia nervosa, which is when a person usually has a distorted image of their body. Sufferers of the psychiatric diagnosis are well below the average body weight and often voluntarily take various weight control measures. For example, those who are anorexic often take diet pills, purposely starve and vomit. It is one of the most dangerous diagnosis, as nearly ten percent who have the condition eventually end up dying. Those most affected by anorexia nervosa are young teenage women in the United States. Unfortunately, many different components add up to anorexia nervosa, including those that are psychological and physiological.

Factors leading up to the condition are not really clear cut, as researchers tend to agree it is somewhat biological, social and psychological. Studies appear to show that anorexia has a genetic risk associated with depression. Serotonin, a neurotransmitter, has also been linked to anorexia nervosa, as those who suffer from the disease usually have altered systems. Another neurobiological factors include melanocortin peptides, which deals with appetite and stress.

Psychological factors leading to anorexia are often studied thoroughly, as it is believed that the condition often forms from the victim's thought of being fat or ugly. Many victims are often prone to believe that they are heavier than they actually are. Cultural factors have also been looked at, especially since Western media usually has an idealized female form. Minorities are less likely to have the condition, while it is most common in rich, white families.

Many different features have shown up again and again in various victims of the condition. Usually, sufferers obsess over food and weight and evaluate themselves solely on the basis of their body shape. They tend to be moody, have low self-esteem and are perfectionists in many ways. School grades usually deteriorate and they have depression. They sometimes even suffer from suicide attempts and fainting. Unfortunately, there are many other different, difficult features seen in those who suffer from anorexia nervosa. It's such a complex condition with so many various kinds of factors involved.

Approximately ninety percent of the victims are female. On top of that, nearly forty percent of those diagnosed with the condition are females between the ages of fifteen and nineteen. The average prevalence of anorexia nervosa is around a third of a percent.

Fortunately, there are several different kind of treatments that attempt to prevent this complex condition. Forms of immediate weight gain are often involved, while sufferers often talk to various kinds of mental health professionals. Recently, psychotherapy has been considered the best way to treat anorexia, as it not only restores a healthy weight but also often improves a victim both socially and psychologically. Family therapy is also quite effective, especially for teenagers who are diagnosed with the condition. Other forms of treatment include antidepressant drugs, which are often not considered to be the best way to treat anorexia. Many support groups and organizations also exist to help those with the condition.

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