



EATING DISORDERS AND SOUTH ASIANS

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- Eating Disorders are disturbances in eating behavior driven by physical, social, and emotional issues. Eating disorders are marked by severe changes in eating habits, such as drastic reduction in eating.¹
- Eating disorders are more common in young women, although men and older women can also suffer from eating disorders.²
- Eating disorders are treatable if diagnosed and can be prevented.
- Two of the most common eating disorders are *anorexia nervosa* and *bulimia nervosa* – these most often develop in girls between the ages of 11 and 18.²
 - **Anorexia** is characterized by inappropriately low (less than 85% of average) body weight, significant attention to thinness, absence of at least three consecutive menstrual cycles, and repeated focus on body shape and weight.
 - **Bulimia** (also known as “binge eating”) is defined as overeating in a small amount of time followed by vomiting, use of diuretics, laxatives and/or excessive exercise.
- Eating disorders are often undiagnosed among young minority women due to shame or other emotional concerns.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Refusal to maintain body weight at or above a minimally normal weight for height, body type, age, and activity level.
- Intense fear of weight gain or being “fat” or extreme concern about body shape.
- Loss of menstrual periods.

- Repeated episodes of overeating accompanied with feeling out of control followed by purging behaviors (typically by self-induced vomiting, abuse of laxatives, diet pills and/or diuretics, excessive exercise, or fasting).
- Frequent dieting.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- If you notice one or more of the listed signs and symptoms in your own behaviors or thought processes, contact your health care provider to discuss it further. If you notice one or more of these listed signs in a family member or friend, encourage them to contact a health care provider. Remember, these symptoms usually get worse – not better, without additional help.
- Help to raise awareness in your community about the importance of recognizing and treating eating disorders.



RESOURCES

National

National Eating Disorders Association

Phone: (206) 382-3587

Website: www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

California

Asian Community Mental Health Services

Phone: (510) 451-6729

Website: www.pamf.org/southasian

Illinois

Asian Human Services

Phone: (773) 728-2235

Website: www.asianhumanservices.org

Maryland

Counselors Helping (South) Asians/Indians

Phone: (443) 615-1355

Website: www.chaicounselors.org

New York

Coalition for Asian Children and Families

Phone: (212) 809-4675

Website: www.cacf.org

South Asian Youth Action (SAYA!)

Phone: (718) 651-3484

Website: www.saya.org

Texas

Asian American Family Services

Phone: (713) 600-9400

Website: www.aafstexas.org

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¹ National Institute of Mental Health. Eating Disorders. Available at:

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/eating-disorders/complete-index.shtml>. Accessed 16 July 2010.

² National Institute of Mental Health. Eating Disorders. Available at:

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/eating-disorders/complete-index.shtml>. Accessed 16 July 2010.

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For further information about SAPHA or to access other SAPHA Fact Sheets, please go to www.SAPHA.org.

