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 share 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](http://www.asianhumanservices.org)

**Maryland**
Counselors Helping (South) Asians/Indians
Phone: (443) 615-1355
Website: [www.chaicounselors.org](http://www.chaicounselors.org)

**New York**
Coalition for Asian Children and Families
Phone: (212) 809-4675
Website: [www.cacf.org](http://www.cacf.org)

South Asian Youth Action (SAYA!)
Phone: (718) 651-3484
Website: [www.saya.org](http://www.saya.org)

**Texas**
Asian American Family Services
Phone: (713) 600-9400
Website: [www.aafstexas.org](http://www.aafstexas.org)

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While every effort has been made to verify information provided, the authors and SAPHA are not liable for errors or omissions. Readers are advised to consult a health care provider before diagnosing, managing, or treating any health problem. Readers should not use this information in place of the judgment of a treating health care provider.

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