



# Analyzing Eating Disorders Causes, Types and Treatment

Elin Ijjwan<sup>†</sup>

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## Introduction

Eating disorders are serious mental health conditions characterized by abnormal eating habits that can severely impact physical health, emotional well-being and overall quality of life. These disorders often involve an unhealthy preoccupation with food, body weight and shape, leading to dangerous behaviors such as severe restriction of food intake, overeating or excessive exercise. Despite their complexity, eating disorders are treatable and understanding the causes, types and treatments is essential for early intervention and effective management. It shows the underlying causes of eating disorders, categorizes the different types and discusses the available treatment options for those affected by these impairing conditions. Eating disorders are complex, that they result from a diverse interactions of genetic, biological, psychological and environmental factors. Understanding these causes is vital for developing effective treatment plans and helping individuals recover.

Studies suggests that eating disorders have a genetic component, with studies showing that individuals with a family history of eating disorders are at a higher risk of developing them. Twin studies have also demonstrated that genetics account for approximately 50%-80% of the risk of developing conditions like anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

Biological factors, such as imbalances in neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine, may also play a role in the development of eating disorders, particularly in individuals with a predisposition to anxiety, depression or obsessive-compulsive behaviors. Many people with eating disorders also suffer from co-occurring mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Individuals with low self-esteem, perfectionistic tendencies or a history of trauma or abuse are also more susceptible to developing an eating disorder. In some cases, these disorders may serve as mechanisms for individuals facing with extreme emotions or stress, providing a sense of control in otherwise chaotic or difficult situations.

The environment and society in which an individual grows up can significantly influence their relationship with food and body image. In modern culture, societal pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards and an idealized thin body image can contribute to the onset of eating disorders, particularly among young women and teenagers. Constant exposure to media portrayals of “perfect” bodies, coupled with social comparison and abuse, can develop a harmful mindset that promotes disordered eating habits. Family dynamics, such as parental focus on appearance or weight, can also contribute to an individual’s risk of developing an eating disorder. There are several

Department of Psychotherapy, University Hospital Tuebingen, Tuebingen, Germany

<sup>†</sup>**Author for Correspondence:** Elin Ijjwan, Department of Psychotherapy, University Hospital Tuebingen, Tuebingen, Germany, China

email: elinijjwan\_uht22.de

distinct types of eating disorders, each with its own symptoms and diagnostic criteria. The most well-known disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder and other specified feeding or eating disorders. Anorexia nervosa is characterized by an extreme fear of gaining weight and a distorted body image, leading individuals to severely restrict their food intake. People with anorexia often view themselves as overweight, even when they are dangerously underweight.

This disorder can lead to serious physical complications, including malnutrition, heart problems, bone density loss and in severe cases death. Symptoms of anorexia include, significant weight loss or refusal to maintain a healthy body weight, intense fear of gaining weight, distorted perception of body shape or size, restriction of calories or avoidance of certain food groups. Bulimia nervosa involves cycles of binge eating followed by adaptive behaviors to avoid weight gain, such as vomiting, using laxatives or excessive exercise. Individuals with bulimia often feel a lack of control during excessive eating, consuming large quantities of food in a short period. Afterward, they experience feelings of shame, guilt or distress, leading them to engage in unhealthy behaviors to “purge” the food from their bodies. Binge Eating Disorder (BED) is the most common eating disorder and it is characterized by recurrent periods of eating large amounts of food in a short time, often to the point of discomfort. Unlike bulimia, individuals with BED do not engage in purging behaviors. However, they may experience feelings of guilt, shame or distress after binge episodes, which can lead to further emotional eating.

Other Specified Feeding or Eating Disorder (OSFED) includes eating disorders that do not meet the specific criteria for anorexia, bulimia

or binge eating disorder but still involve disordered eating patterns that cause significant distress or impairment. Examples include atypical anorexia (where an individual exhibits all symptoms of anorexia but maintains a normal or above-normal weight) and purging disorder (where individuals engage in purging behaviors without binge eating). Eating disorders are serious conditions that require a comprehensive treatment plan personalized to each individual’s unique needs. Treatment often involves a combination of medical, nutritional and psychological interventions, with the aim of restoring physical health, dealing underlying psychological issues and developing healthier relationships with food and body image.

Psychological treatment is a vital component of recovery from eating disorders. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) helps individuals identify and change distorted thoughts and behaviors related to food, body image and self-worth. It teaches patients managing strategies for managing stress and negative emotions without resorting to disordered eating.

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## Conclusion

Eating disorders are complex disorders that require a complete approach to treatment. Early intervention is essential, as eating disorders can lead to severe physical and psychological consequences if left untreated. By understanding the causes, recognizing the symptoms and seeking complete treatment individuals struggling with eating disorders can achieve recovery and regain control of their health and well-being. Managing societal pressures, promoting positive body image and making supportive environments can help prevent the development of eating disorders and promote healthier relationships with food.