



Lets Talk About it



Question: HOW DO I RECOGNIZE SIGNS OF AN EATING DISORDER? DOES SOMEONE HAVE TO BE SERIOUSLY UNDERWEIGHT TO BE DIAGNOSED WITH AN EATING DISORDER?

Answered by: Fran Tierney, MA LCPC; Psychotherapist & Coordinator of the Eating Disorder Program at the Ben Gordon Center

One obvious symptom of an eating disorder is weight loss or weight fluctuation; however, this does not apply to everyone with an eating disorder. Someone struggling with **Binge Eating Disorder**, **Bulimia** or **Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified** may not experience much weight loss, they may in fact, be over weight due to bingeing and/or purging, or not lose weight rapidly or drastically. The stereotype is that someone must be severely underweight, which is only one criteria of **Anorexia**. There are several clues to an eating disorder that are commonly found including: excessive exercise, bingeing and/or purging, caloric restriction, being a picky eater or misuse of laxatives or diet pills. A cognitive factor found in those who meet criteria of any eating disorder is excessive thinking and planning food intake, food restriction, or excessive calculation of eating/burning calories. Most individuals who are struggling with an eating disorder will begin avoiding social events or outings that include food—due to the discomfort and fear associated with not being in control over their food choices or food rituals.

It is also common that people with an eating disorder may quit menstruating, lose hair, experience anemia, damage their teeth, damage to esophagus, break their fingernails easily. You may not see that they also experience osteoporosis, heart problems, kidney problems, damage to their colon, low body temperature, and the decreased ability to recognize hunger. Often times, dentists or primary care physicians will recognize the medical changes and recommend an eating disorder assessment. It is important to also be aware that some healthy behaviors can also become unhealthy if taken to an extreme. This is often the case with the beginning stages of an eating disorder. It is not uncommon for someone to commit themselves to a “healthy lifestyle” and once they receive positive feedback from others on their weight loss, that is often a turning point for someone to go from “healthy” changes to obsessive thoughts and focus on food and weight.

Eating Disorders are serious and can be life threatening if not treated. If you or someone that you know may be experiencing eating disorder symptoms, please call 815-756-4875 to set up an assessment. Our Eating Disorder program at the Ben Gordon Center is multi-disciplinary in that we offer individual therapy, group therapy and family therapy as well as nutrition counseling and psychiatric/medication monitoring services. We will also work with your primary care physician to make sure that you or your loved one is receiving the best possible treatment.

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Every family at some point may need assistance when they are not able to cope with the stress and challenges facing family members.

The Ben Gordon Center is a skilled provider in individual, couples, marital and family counseling. Our staff is experts in counseling for adults, children, teens and families.

Our staff has experience in working with individuals on a variety of mental health and substance abuse challenges including:

- **Anxiety**
- **Depression**
- **Bi-Polar Disorder**
- **ADHD/ADD**
- **Divorce**
- **Family Counseling**
- **Couples and Marital Counseling**
- **Trauma**
- **Sexual Abuse**
- **Eating Disorders**
- **Alcohol Abuse**
- **Drug Abuse**
- **Autism**



***For More information about Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
Call 815-756-4875***

Or visit our Website at [www. Bengordoncenter.org](http://www.Bengordoncenter.org)

Ben Gordon Center, Inc. offers services on a sliding fee for those who qualify. Ben Gordon Center, Inc. also accepts Medicaid, Medicare, and all Insurance Plans.

The Ben Gordon Center, Inc. is fully accredited by JCAHO and maintains the Gold Seal of Quality. The Ben Gordon Center also is certified by the Illinois Division of Mental Health and the Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services.



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