

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin

Eating disorders guidelines

Why screen?

Eating disorders are a very serious and complex problem, which can affect preadolescents and adolescents of any gender. They are the third most common chronic condition in adolescents and the #1 fatal psychiatric disorder. Symptoms and behaviors of eating disorders are summarized below.

Anorexia nervosa

- Refusal to maintain body weight at or above a minimally normal weight, based on height, body type, age and activity level
- Intense fear of gaining weight or being fat
- Feeling fat or overweight despite dramatic weight loss

Bulimia nervosa

- Recurrent bingeing (consumption of large amount of food with feelings of being out of control)
- Compensating mechanisms for bingeing (vomiting, laxatives, diet pills and exercise)
- Body image disturbances (hating his or her body or feeling fat even when not overweight)

Eating disorder not otherwise specified (the most common eating disorder)

- Impaired eating patterns or body image disturbance but does not meet all of the criteria for the above disorders (For example, frequently dieting or skipping meals but at normal weight.)

Screening questions

- Do you make yourself sick because you feel uncomfortably full?
- Do you worry you have lost control over how much you eat?
- Have you recently lost more than 14 pounds in a 3-month period?
- Do you believe yourself to be fat when others say you are too thin?
- Would you say that food dominates your life?

Score 1 point for every "yes." A score equal to or greater than 2 indicates a likely case of anorexia nervosa or bulimia.

(over)

Warning signs of an eating disorder

- Fatigue
- Going on a diet or abruptly changing eating patterns (for example, becoming vegetarian)
- Dizziness
- Abnormal periods
- Being cold when others are warm
- Complaining of abdominal pain, constipation or heartburn
- Frequent negative comments about his or her body
- Feeling fat when he or she is not
- Overexercising
- Frequently uses the bathroom after eating

What can you do?

If you are concerned your patient may have an eating disorder, it is important to have him or her evaluated. You may refer to Children's Hospital of Wisconsin's Eating Disorders Program, which offers a multidisciplinary team that specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of eating disorders. Call (414) 266-2754 for more information.

Physician consultation and referral

Refer a patient • Discuss a case • Arrange a transport

chw.org/refer

(414) 266-2460 or toll-free (800) 266-0366

Appointments

Outpatient specialty appointments

chw.org/appointment

(414) 607-5280 or toll-free (877) 607-5280