

# MALES AND EATING DISORDERS

- One in ten individuals seeking treatment for an eating disorder is a teenage boy or man.
- Most often, the disorders develop during the teenage years, but there are cases where boys as young as eight or men as old as 60 have been affected.
- Most professionals believe that eating disorders in men are no different than eating disorders in women.
- Males are more “at risk” for developing eating disorders if they participate in sports with weight restrictions. These include running, body-building, wrestling, swimming and gymnastics.
- Diagnosis and recovery are frequently complicated by a man’s reluctance to seek treatment since society generally regards an eating disorder as a “woman’s issue.”
- Eating disorders in men, as in women, are not about food or vanity. They develop as a way of coping with the conflicts, pressures and stresses of life. An eating disorder may be a way to experience some control when the rest of life seems out of control.
- When individuals refer to eating disorders they are speaking about anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, or binge eating disorder:

• *Anorexia* is self-imposed starvation. It is a serious, life-threatening disorder. Although people with anorexia are obsessed with food, they continually deny their hunger. They may also limit or restrict other parts of their life besides food such as relationships, social activities or pleasure.

*Bulimia* is the repeated cycle of out-of-control eating followed by some form of purging. This may include self-induced vomiting, excessive use of laxatives or diuretics, or obsessive exercising.

*Binge Eating Disorder* (commonly called compulsive overeating) is marked by episodes of uncontrolled eating or bingeing, followed by periods of guilt and depression, but not purging. A binge is marked by the consumption of large amounts of food, sometimes accompanied by a pressured, “frenzied” feeling.

**For more information about food, weight or body-image issues, call  
The Renfrew Center at 1-800-RENFREW or visit [www.renfrew.org](http://www.renfrew.org).**