

# eating disorders in males

As the majority of people who experience an eating disorder are female, the fact that men also suffer from eating disorders is often overlooked.



It is important to recognise that men can have similar weight and shape concerns as women, and often experience similar pressures to conform to appearance ideals.

## Prevalence Rates of Eating Disorders in Males

Whilst Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa are more common amongst women, a substantial proportion of people with these disorders are male.

Additionally, men and women seem to have a very similar rate of occurrence of binge-eating disorder.

The actual rate of eating disorders amongst men may be higher than these figures suggest. Here are some reasons why:

- Some men may feel reluctant to seek help for their eating disorder.
- Men may fail to even recognise their problem due to the public perception that eating disorders are a 'female' issue.
- Health professionals may be less likely to recognise these symptoms and so the problem may go untreated for longer.
- Males may also exhibit a different form of eating disorder than females, whereby they tend to attempt to develop a more muscular body shape rather than a smaller one.



## Men and Women with ED: Similarities and Differences

A number of symptoms are **common** to both men and women who suffer from an eating disorder.

These similar experiences include:

- Self-esteem concerns
- Concerns about shape and weight
- Serious medical complications
- Lowered hormone levels (which can lead to bone loss, or osteoporosis)
- Simultaneous experience of other conditions, such as depression

Whilst men and women show these similarities, a number of **differences** can also be seen in the way their eating disorders manifest:

- Males with eating disorders show a greater history of obesity.
- Males tend to develop their eating disorder at an older age than women do.
- Disordered eating is more often related to sport participation amongst boys and men.
- Low hormone levels in males results in the absence of early morning erections and nocturnal emissions ('wet dreams'). These return with the restoration of healthy weight.
- Weight control methods tend to differ between men and women. As well as restricting their eating, men are more likely to control their weight with exercise, in order to build up lean body mass (muscle).

## Seeking Treatment

Eating disorders are not exclusively 'female disorders'. If you are a male who suffers from an eating disorder, it is important that you seek professional advice and treatment. Talking to your GP is often a good place to start.