

# starvation syndrome

## Starvation Syndrome

The effects of starvation on the human body are well documented. When starved of calories, the human body responds in a way known as “Starvation Syndrome”. People with Anorexia Nervosa suffer from starvation as a result of severely restricting their calorie intake. In Bulimia Nervosa, purging and restricting behaviour can also result in a depletion of caloric absorption, which can therefore lead to self-starvation.

## The Minnesota Experiment

In the 1940s, there was an experiment involving a group of fit young men who had been drafted into the US army. They were conscientious objectors to military service and they had volunteered to be in a humanitarian programme.

The Minnesota Experiment required them to reduce their calorie intake by half. After six months of this planned starvation, the men experienced not only the expected physical changes, but mental changes too.



- Decrease in physical strength.
  - Giddiness and momentary blackouts.
  - Pale, cold, dry, and marked skin.
  - Tiredness.
  - Decrease in mental alertness.
- Hair that is thin, dry and/or falling out.
  - Preoccupation with food, including persistent thoughts and dreams about food.

- Change in mealtime behaviours. This can include toying with food, or being ritualistic about the way in which food is eaten.
- Decrease in self-discipline.
- Decrease in comprehension.
- Loss in concentration.
- Apathy.
- Depression.
- A loss of ambition.
- Moodiness and irritability.



These symptoms are experienced by anyone who is starved of calories. *If you recognise these symptoms in your own life, it is important to remember that they all stem from one thing: starvation.*

## Recovery from Starvation

The men in the Minnesota Experiment recovered from their physical and mental symptoms when they began to eat again.

The physical and mental changes you have experienced will also be reversed when you increase your food intake and supply your body with the energy it needs.



Through regular and healthy eating, your body can regain its strength and fight these symptoms of starvation. You may need to consult a medical practitioner or other health professional for support with this.