

Eating Disorder Statistics

How Many People Have Eating Disorders?

- The South Carolina Department of Mental Health estimates that 8 million Americans (seven million women and one million men) have an eating disorder.
- Eating disorder statistics provided by the National Eating Disorder Association are even higher, and indicate that 10 million American women suffer from eating disorders.
- 10-15% of all Americans suffer from some type of serious eating disorder.
- 61% of American adults are either overweight or obese.
- One out of every five US adults is classified as obese (BMI of 30 or greater).
- An estimated 10-15% of people with anorexia or bulimia are males. Many clinicians believe that this figure is underreported because many men are ashamed to admit that they may be suffering from something thought to affect only women. *Newsweek* magazine reported 40% of 131 Cornell University football players surveyed engaged in eating disordered behaviors (bingeing and purging), with 10% classified as having clinical eating disorders. Many men suffer from bulimia under the guise of "staying in shape" and use compulsive exercise as a form of purging.
- Seventy-seven percent of individuals with eating disorders report that the illness can last anywhere from one to 15 years or even longer in some cases. It is estimated that approximately six percent of serious cases die. For many others, there are long-term, irreversible consequences which can affect one's physical and emotional health. Up to now, only 50% all people with this devastating disease report being cured.
- One in 200 American women suffers from anorexia.
- Two to three in 100 American women suffers from bulimia.
- 1.1% - 4.2% of females suffer from bulimia nervosa in their lifetime.
- As many as 10% of college women suffer from a clinical or nearly clinical eating disorder, including 5.1% who suffer from bulimia nervosa.
- Studies indicate that by their first year of college, 4.5 to 18% of women and 0.4% of men have a history of bulimia.

How Dangerous are Eating Disorders?

- Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. A study by the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD) reported the following eating disorder statistics:
- 5-10% of anorexics die within 10 years after contracting the disease and 18-20% of anorexics will be dead after 20 years.
- Anorexia nervosa has the highest death rate of any psychiatric illness (including major depression).
- The mortality rate associated with anorexia nervosa is 12 times higher than the death rate of ALL causes of death for females 15-24 years old.
- Without treatment, up to 20% of people with serious eating disorders die. With treatment, the mortality rate falls to 2-3%.

How Many People Receive Treatment for an Eating Disorder?

- Only 1 in 10 people with eating disorders receive treatment. According to eating disorders statistics, about 80% of the girls/women who have accessed care for their eating disorders do not get the intensity of treatment they need to stay in recovery (they are often sent home weeks earlier than the recommended stay).
- Treatment of an eating disorder in the US ranges from \$500 per day to \$2,800 per day. The average cost for a month of inpatient treatment is \$30,000, and it is estimated that individuals with eating disorders need anywhere from 3 to 6 months of inpatient care.

Eating Disorder Statistics for Children and Adolescents

- Anorexia is the third most common chronic illness among adolescents.
- 50% of girls between the ages of 11 and 13 see themselves as overweight.
- According to *Time* magazine, 80% of all children have been on a diet by the time they've reached fourth grade.
- 86% of people with eating disorders report onset of an eating disorder by age 20.
- 10% report onset at ten years or younger.

Body Image and Dieting

- Roughly 25 million men and 43 million women are dieting to lose weight. Another 21 million men and 26 million women are dieting to maintain weight. In total, there are nearly 116 million adults dieting at any given time — representing about 55% of the total adult population.
- 91% of women surveyed on a college campus in the mid-90s had attempted to control their weight through dieting. 22% dieted "often" or "always."
- 35% of "normal dieters" progress to pathological dieting. Of those, 20-25% progress to partial or full-syndrome eating disorders.

Testimony for HHS Committee Hearing
HB 363

“An act eliminating the exclusion for eating disorders for the Mental Health Parity Act”

Laurie Thatcher
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As a mental health professional who works with eating disorders and an older woman who went to treatment for an eating disorder at age 50 I ask that you support HB 363 which will eliminate the exclusion of eating disorders from the Mental Health Parity Act.

Eating disorders are first and foremost a mental health issue, that affects the physical body in a variety of ways. To date, insurance companies authorize treatment based on the patient's physical health instead of the underlying critical mental health issues. When I went to treatment at age 50, half way through my stay, because I was weight restored, insurance would no longer authorize my treatment. I was at the most vulnerable part of treatment, weight restored, without the defenses of the eating disorder, flooded with anxiety and depression. This was a critical time in my treatment, a chance to learn how to function in life without the eating disorder. I needed the intensive support that treatment provided so I could learn new ways of living. Simultaneously, I had to fight the insurance company to keep me authorized for a longer period of time. I needed the help and containment that intensive treatment offered but they wanted to discharge me based solely on my physical status.

Eating disorders are often thought to occur only in younger people (mostly women) and they “age out” of as they get older. This is a faulty perception. I was a high functioning adult, plagued by an eating disorder from age 16-50. Because I was a competitive athlete, and only 10 lbs lower than my ideal body weight people around me, including health professionals, didn't connect that the health issues I started having at age 40 were the direct cause of my eating disorder. I was medically treated for sleep issues, thyroid disease, chronic fatigue, and constant sickness, but never got better. Only after I went to treatment, weight restored and received treatment for the underlying anxiety and depression, did I regain my physical and mental health. Treating the physical issues is not enough, it is a symptom of underlying mental health issues that must be treated until enough internal stability within the person is restored, so they don't have to return to eating behaviors. This is the only way an eating disorder can be cured.

HB 363 is a crucial step in helping people who suffer with eating disorders get the mental health treatment they need. Thank you for your support.