

Exercise

Professional Version | US English

Am I Experiencing Anorexia?



Description

Anorexia (anorexia nervosa) is a condition characterized by the restriction of energy (food) intake relative to requirements, leading to significantly lower body weight than would be expected. People with anorexia have an intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat. They often feel a disturbance in the way they perceive their physical traits, and base their self-worth closely upon their weight or appearance. Anorexia nervosa is experienced by between 1 and 4 people out of every 100 (Keski-Rahkonen & Mustelin, 2016).

The DSM-5 diagnostic criteria for anorexia nervosa include:

- A restricted of energy intake relative to requirements, leading to a significantly low body weight relative to the individual's age, sex, developmental trajectory, and physical health.
- An intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat, or persistent behavior that interferes with weight gain, even at a significantly low weight.
- A disturbance in the way one's body weight or shape is experienced, undue influence of body weight or shape on self-evaluation, or persistent lack of recognition of the seriousness of the current low body weight.

The ICD-11 diagnostic criteria for anorexia nervosa include:

- A significantly low body weight for the individual's height, age, developmental stage, or weight history. A commonly used threshold is the body mass index (BMI). Being below 18.5 kg/m² (for adults) or having a BMI-for-age under the 5th percentile (for children and adolescents) is a sign of anorexia nervosa.
- A persistent pattern of restrictive eating or other behaviors aimed at establishing or maintaining abnormally low body weight, typically associated with an extreme fear of weight gain. Behaviors may be aimed at reducing energy intake or increasing energy expenditure.
- An excessive preoccupation with body weight or shape. Low body weight is overvalued and central to the person's self-evaluation, or the person's body weight or shape is inaccurately perceived to be normal or even excessive.

Am I Experiencing Anorexia? is an indicative screening tool, designed to help clients self-assess whether their experiences might warrant further investigation. It is not intended to give a formal diagnosis or provide a measure of severity.

Instructions

Suggested Question



Some people who report similar experiences to yours have a condition called anorexia. Would you like to try a short quiz that could give us an idea of whether this problem troubles you?

References

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.).

Keski-Rahkonen, A., & Mustelin, L. (2016). Epidemiology of eating disorders in Europe: prevalence, incidence, comorbidity, course, consequences, and risk factors. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 29, 340-345.

Stansfeld, S., Clark, C., Bebbington, P., King, M., Jenkins, R., & Hinchliffe, S. (2016). Chapter 2: Common mental disorders. In S. McManus, P. Bebbington, R. Jenkins, & T. Brugha (Eds.), *Mental health and wellbeing in England: Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2014*. Leeds: NHS Digital.

World Health Organization. (2019). *ICD-11: International classification of diseases* (11th revision). Retrieved from <https://icd.who.int/>

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Anorexia should only be diagnosed by a mental health professional or a doctor. However, answering the questions below can give you an idea of whether you might find it helpful to have a professional assessment.

Have you recently lost more than one stone (14lb / 6kg) in a three month period?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Would you say that food dominates your life?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you believe you are fat when others say you are too thin?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you worry that you could lose control over how much you eat?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you ever make yourself vomit because you feel uncomfortably full, or are worried about gaining weight?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you limit how much you eat or exclude certain foods to influence your shape or weight?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you felt a strong desire to lose weight?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your weight, shape, or eating influence how you judge yourself as a person?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you gone for long periods of time without eating anything at all?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Has thinking about food, eating, or calories made it difficult to concentrate on things you are interested in (e.g., work or a conversation)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

If you answered 'yes' to many of these questions, you might be experiencing anorexia. However, it's not always clear whether someone has an eating disorder. If you relate to any of the symptoms described above, it's best to speak to a professional.

Sometimes people worry that their difficulties aren't serious enough, or they feel guilty or ashamed for struggling. It's important to remember that eating disorders can be very serious. If you are at all concerned about your eating or your weight, speak to your family doctor or a mental health professional.

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