**Anorexia Nervosa**

An estimated 0.5 to 3.7 percent of females suffer from anorexia nervosa in their lifetime. Symptoms of anorexia nervosa include:

1. Resistance to maintaining body weight at or above a minimally normal weight for age and height
2. Intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat, even though underweight
3. Disturbance in the way in which one's body weight or shape is experienced, undue influence of body weight or shape on self-evaluation, or denial of the seriousness of the current low body weight
4. Infrequent or absent menstrual periods (in females who have reached puberty)

People with this disorder see themselves as overweight even though they are dangerously thin. The process of eating becomes an obsession. Unusual eating habits develop, such as avoiding food and meals, picking out a few foods and eating these in small quantities, or carefully weighing and portioning food. People with anorexia may repeatedly check their body weight, and many engage in other techniques to control their weight, such as intense and compulsive exercise, or purging by means of vomiting and abuse of laxatives, enemas, and diuretics. Girls with anorexia often experience a delayed onset of their first menstrual period.

The course and outcome of anorexia nervosa vary across individuals: some fully recover after a single episode; some have a fluctuating pattern of weight gain and relapse; and others experience a chronically deteriorating course of illness over many years. The mortality rate among people with anorexia has been estimated at 0.56 percent per year, or approximately 5.6 percent per decade, which is about 12 times higher than the annual death rate due to all causes of death among females ages 15-24 in the general population. The most common causes of death are complications of the disorder, such as cardiac arrest or electrolyte imbalance, and suicide.

**Bulimia Nervosa**

An estimated 1.1 percent to 4.2 percent of females have bulimia nervosa in their lifetime. Symptoms of bulimia nervosa include:

1. Recurrent episodes of binge eating, characterized by eating an excessive amount of food within a discrete period of time and by a sense of lack of control over eating during the episode
2. Recurrent inappropriate compensatory behavior in order to prevent weight gain, such as self-induced vomiting or misuse of laxatives, diuretics, enemas, or other medications (purging); fasting; or excessive exercise
3. The binge eating and inappropriate compensatory behaviors both occur, on average, at least twice a week for 3 months
4. Self-evaluation is unduly influenced by body shape and weight
Because purging or other compensatory behavior follows the binge-eating episodes, people with bulimia usually weigh within the normal range for their age and height. However, like individuals with anorexia, they may fear gaining weight, desire to lose weight, and feel intensely dissatisfied with their bodies. People with bulimia often perform the behaviors in secrecy, feeling disgusted and ashamed when they binge, yet relieved once they purge.

**Binge-Eating Disorder**

Community surveys have estimated that between 2 percent and 5 percent of Americans experience binge-eating disorder in a 6-month period. Symptoms of binge-eating disorder include:

1. Recurrent episodes of binge eating, characterized by eating an excessive amount of food within a discrete period of time and by a sense of lack of control over eating during the episode.
2. The binge-eating episodes are associated with at least 3 of the following: eating much more rapidly than normal; eating until feeling uncomfortably full; eating large amounts of food when not feeling physically hungry; eating alone because of being embarrassed by how much one is eating; feeling disgusted with oneself, depressed, or very guilty after overeating.
3. Marked distress about the binge-eating behavior.
4. The binge eating occurs, on average, at least 2 days a week for 6 months.
5. The binge eating is not associated with the regular use of inappropriate compensatory behaviors (e.g., purging, fasting, excessive exercise).

People with binge-eating disorder experience frequent episodes of out-of-control eating, with the same binge-eating symptoms as those with bulimia. The main difference is that individuals with binge-eating disorder do not purge their bodies of excess calories. Therefore, many with the disorder are overweight for their age and height. Feelings of self-disgust and shame associated with this illness can lead to bingeing again, creating a cycle of binge eating.

**Obesity**

Obesity means having too much body fat. It is different from being overweight, which means weighing too much. The weight may come from muscle, bone, fat and/or body water. Both terms mean that a person's weight is greater than what's considered healthy for his or her height.

Obesity occurs over time when you eat more calories than you use. The balance between calories-in and calories-out differs for each person. Factors that might tip the balance include your genetic makeup, overeating, eating high-fat foods and not being physically active.
Being obese increases your risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, arthritis and some cancers. If you are obese, losing even 5 to 10 percent of your weight can delay or prevent some of these diseases.