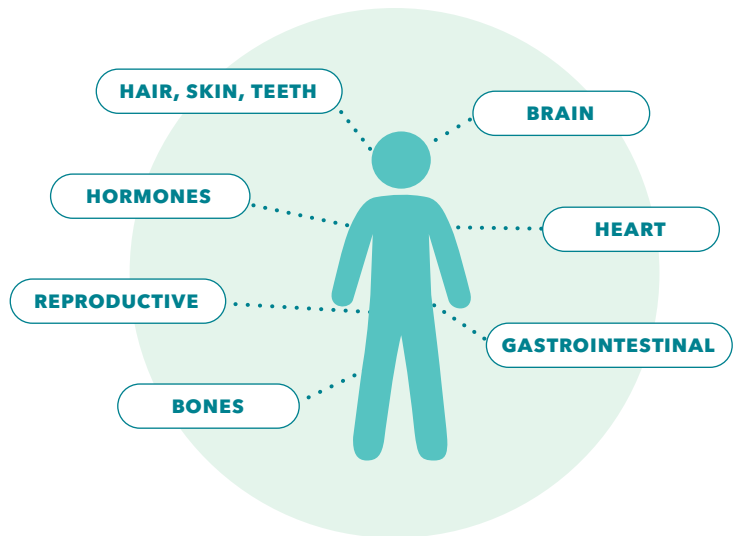


A MEDICAL LENS: EATING DISORDER TREATMENT AND RECOVERY



Most medical complications associated with eating disorders are treatable with medical care, consistent nutrition and full weight restoration. Understanding the health consequences associated with eating disorders can increase the likelihood of early detection, accurate diagnosis and treatment. Realize that eating disorders can affect every organ system in the body and come with cognitive, behavioral, and physical signs and symptoms. And know that full recovery from an eating disorder is possible.



Eating disorders can affect all parts of the body. Fortunately, most medical consequences are reversible.

COMMON MEDICAL CONSEQUENCES

- **Brain Development:** Changes in brain structure and function can occur as a result of eating disorder behaviors.
- **Cardiovascular Issues:** Irregular heartbeats, low blood pressure and other heart conditions can result from malnutrition and electrolyte imbalances.
- **Gastrointestinal Issues:** Disorders such as acid reflux, constipation and damage to the digestive system can be associated with eating disorder behaviors.
- **Bone Health:** Osteoporosis and frail bones may occur due to calcium and vitamin D deficiencies.
- **Reproductive Issues:** Menstrual irregularities, amenorrhea (absence of menstruation) and other fertility issues can be associated with eating disorders.
- **Hormonal Imbalances:** Imbalances in hormones can affect metabolism, growth and overall hormonal regulation.
- **Hair, Skin, Teeth:** Individuals who engage in frequent eating disorder behaviors may experience changes in their hair, skin, and oral health.

Importance of Normalized Meal Plan

Needed for all eating disorder diagnoses.

A normalized meal plan nourishes the body, allowing for improved cognitive functioning and emotion regulation. There are many benefits to nutritional rehabilitation, including:

- Hormone regulation (for people of all genders)
- Improved bone health
- Increased energy
- Mood stabilization and reduction of depression, anxiety and irritability
- Healing from malnutrition

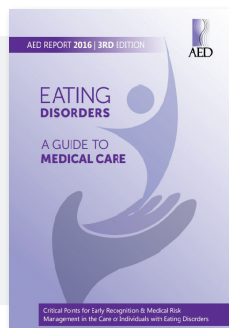
Importance of Weight Restoration

- Growth suppression and food restriction alone can result in eating disorder behavior and thinking.
- Sustained cognitive and behavioral change cannot be expected until nutritional status is normalized and maintained.
- Treatment goal is to normalize weight before we can expect to normalize behavior and thinking.
- Weight restoration is associated with improved cognitive, emotional and physical functioning.
- Psychiatric medication interventions are not optimally effective at low weights.
- Low discharge weight is associated with poorer prognosis and potentially rehospitalization.

Role of the Caregiver

You as caregiver are in a unique position to offer encouragement, provide support and hold hope for your loved one. Education, connection and self-care will allow you to stay the course and find renewed strength as you walk alongside your loved one throughout the recovery journey.

- Continue to educate yourself.
- Get support by leaning on a trusted family member or friend, joining a caregiver support group or securing a therapist for yourself.
- Get involved. Participate in family therapy with or without your loved one.
- Support your loved one in full nutritional stabilization by becoming familiar with the meal plan and ways in which to support.
- Plan for success and prepare for slips and lapses.



“Eating Disorders: A Guide to Medical Care” is an accessible guide that was originally developed by a parent and is published by the Academy for Eating Disorders (AED). It is often referred to as “the purple book.” Caregivers can refer to this book when supporting their loved one and discussing their care with treatment team members.

Please consult with a medical provider and treatment team members regarding any medical questions or concerns.

For additional resources, visit EatingRecovery.com/FamilyFriendsSeries
For more information on this topic or if you have questions, please email Resources@ERCPATHLIGHT.COM