

New England Eating Disorders Program  
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## SIGNS OF AN EATING DISORDER

Eating disorders are dangerous illnesses with life-threatening consequences. Recognizing warning signs is important as research shows that early intervention, or treatment, increases the likelihood of a full recovery. Below are some examples of eating disorder signs and symptoms. Warning signs are not meant to diagnosis eating disorders. Some individuals with a disorder may show many signs at once, while others very few. If you are concerned about yourself or a loved one, please contact the New England Eating Disorders Program at Sweetser for an evaluation.

### Emotional/Behavioral Warning Signs

- Strictly dieting
- Obsessing over calories
  - Counting and logging calories, restricting calories, “burning” a particular number of calories when exercising
- Cutting back or avoiding certain food groups or categories (e.g., carbohydrates, fat, desserts)
- Compulsive exercising
  - Driven exercise, exercising when physically injured or ill, choosing exercise over social opportunities or personal interests
- Secretive eating
  - Leaving empty wrappers or containers hidden, avoiding eating in front of others or at restaurants
- Using diet pills, diuretics, or laxatives
  - Purchasing large quantities, hiding empty bottles, taking multiple trips to the drugstore, increased online drugstore shopping
- Consistently spending time in the bathroom, especially after meals, as a means to hide self-induced vomiting
- Over-focusing on body weight, shape, or size
  - Spending a lot of time looking in the mirror, appearance reassurance seeking, excessively self-weighing, repeatedly touching or looking down at parts of the body
- Withdrawing from social groups or activities
- Overusing gum, mints, mouthwash, or teeth brushing

### Physical Warning Signs

- Significant weight fluctuations
- Calluses on the back of hands from self-induced vomiting
- Yellowing of the teeth and/or the erosion of enamel from vomiting
- Gastrointestinal upset
- Irregular menstrual cycles
- Fainting or feeling dizzy
- Muscle weakness
- Irregular sleeping patterns and/or trouble sleeping
- Difficulty maintaining body heat (i.e., feeling cold often)
- Frequent illness due to lowered immune function
- Difficulty in school or work due to poor concentration, attention, and/or memory