

Pediatric Feeding Disorder

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EDITORIAL

Children are increasingly becoming affected by diet culture and body shame. Studies show 40%-60% of girls 6-12 years old are worried about their body shape or weight. 80% of girls have been on a diet by the 4th grade. Of elementary school-aged kids, 69% of those who read magazines say they have influenced their body image, and 47% say the pictures make them want to lose weight.

The term eating disorders refers to a variety of conditions that involve abnormal eating behaviors. Eating disorders are serious mental health problems that can be life-threatening, so they require clinical care by a physician or other healthcare professional. Two of the most common eating disorders among adolescents and young adults are anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

Anorexia nervosa, also known as simply anorexia, is an eating disorder that involves self-starvation.

Bulimia nervosa, usually referred to as bulimia, is defined as uncontrolled episodes of overeating (bingeing) usually followed by purging (self-induced vomiting); misuse of laxatives, enemas, or medications that cause increased production of urine; fasting; or excessive exercise to control weight.

One out of every 100 females between the ages of 16 and 18 years old suffers from anorexia, and five to 10 percent of teens

diagnosed with anorexia are males. Anorexia is found in across all socioeconomic groups and a variety of ethnic profiles.

The majority of bulimics are female, adolescent, and from a high socioeconomic group. Bulimia has been found in all westernized industrial countries, and it is estimated that 1 to 4 percent of females in the United States have bulimia.

Eating disorders are serious conditions that can create significant physical complications to every organ in the body, so it's important to seek medical treatment as soon as possible. There could be damage to the heart, bones, blood, digestive tract, and kidneys to name a few. Eating disorders place a great deal of physical stress on the body no matter what age that person is. In a growing body, it is even more vital that weight is restored quickly so that the child's height, bone strength or fertility is not permanently compromised. If a child is not eating enough when they are in a growing stage their height could be compromised.

If you are the parent of a child with an eating disorder, it's important to reach out to your child's pediatrician, nutritionist, or other mental health professionals to help you feel supported and get the best care for your child. Setting the course for a healthy relationship with food will benefit your child's entire life. So even if you are uncertain whether there may be a problem, it never hurts to reach out to professionals

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Received date: June 20, 2020; **Accepted date:** July 05, 2020; **Published date:** July 23, 2020

Citation: Cohen A (2020) Pediatric Feeding Disorder. *Pediatr Ther* 10:365. doi:10.35248/2161-0665.20.10.365

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