

Anorexia nervosa

Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder that affects mostly adolescent girls and young women. It usually starts during their teen years. Anorexia nervosa sufferers have an abnormal fear of gaining weight even when they are underweight. They are hypersensitive about being fat and shapeless.

They see body weight and shape as the main measures of self-worth. Hence, they go to great extremes in controlling their weight – mainly through excessive dieting.

The obsession with keeping slim rules their lives. In the case of some young sufferers, this obsession reflects an inability to adjust to their transition to adulthood and the return to pre-pubertal body shape through dieting brings about temporary relief.

Anorexia nervosa is much more than just a problem of fear of food and of getting fat. It is a psychological disorder that affects the sufferer's behaviour, emotions, thinking and social interactions.

Factors such as slim-image worship, overprotective parents, communication deficiency, and an inability to deal with personal conflicts may also cause anorexia nervosa.

Anorexic sufferers seldom seek help as a matter of course. It is, therefore, important that their families and friends prompt them to seek professional help. It is also important that their families and friends show them care and understanding and are supportive of them throughout the recovery process.