



Anorexia: The Basics

- Anorexia is the refusal to keep the body at a certain minimal weight with an intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat, even though under-weight, and an inability to see that the body is underweight. Anorexia is a life-threatening disease and can result in death if not treated.
- A person becomes anorexic when their body weight falls below 85% of their Average Body Weight. ABW in adolescent and adult females is approximately 100 pounds for the first five feet in height plus 5 pounds for each inch over 5 feet. (5'10" = 150 pound, anorexic would be under 127.5 pounds). ABW for males is 106 pounds for the first five feet in height plus 6 pounds for each inch over 5 feet.

- Anorexia includes not only a low body weight but also: the inability to see the body's thinness and recognize the danger of being underweight and using body weight as the only factor in self-esteem and happiness.
- Another criterion for anorexia is that in female adolescents and adults who have started menstruating, menses have stopped for at least three months.
- Anorexia is a life-threatening disease that affects primarily young women. Without treatment, up to 20% of people with serious eating disorders die.
- The health consequences of anorexia are severe and include: Abnormally slow heart rate and low blood pressure, risk of heart failure, decreased bone density, muscle loss and weakness, severe dehydration (can result in kidney failure), severe constipation, fainting, fatigue, and overall weakness, dry hair and skin, hair loss, the growth of downy layer of hair (lanugo) all over the body, low body temperature and reversible and irreversible brain damage and death.
- Treatment is usually long term and can be expensive. Treatment should include medical supervision to monitor the re-introduction of food, nutritional education, counseling and support groups.

Resources

National Eating Disorders Association Helpline

Tel: 1-800-931-2237

Website: www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

Eating Disorder Referral and Information Center

Website: www.edreferral.com

National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders

Website: www.anad.org

Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc.

Website: www.anred.com

Something Fishy

Website: www.somethingfishy.org

The Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness

Website: www.eatingdisorderinfo.org