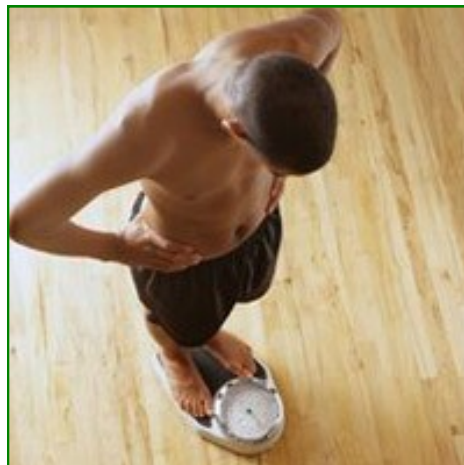




**Support and Empathy** for people with  
**Eating Disorders**

*"from a seed a flower blooms as do people who blossom in life".....*

**SEED**  
**Eating Disorders Support Services**  
**A Guide for Men**



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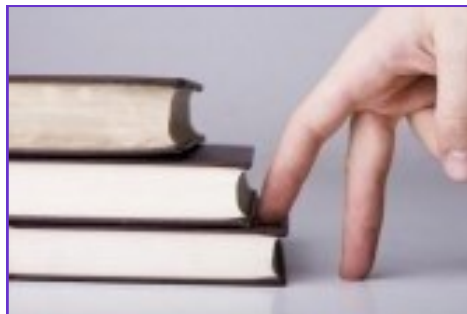
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[www.seedeatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.seedeatingdisorders.org.uk)



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## Introduction

### MEN GET EATING DISORDERS TOO

It is a myth to say that males do not develop eating disorders. They Do!

Many males who have celebrity status have come forward to say that they have had an eating disorder in the past.

There should never be a stigma to having an eating disorder.

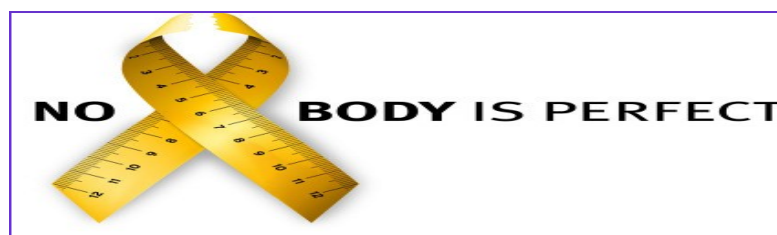
The eating disorder may be a part of who you are today, and as people move forward into recovery, they are able to reflect back and look at their journey and be proud that they have come through and are living the life they have wanted for themselves.

An eating disorder has the highest mortality rate of any other mental health illness and it has **NO** barriers when it comes to age or gender!

A male - although they do not seek help readily - has every right to a service and must not be told this is a phase they are going through.

SEED have lots of information available about issues to do with eating disorders. These are available to download on [www.seedeatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.seedeatingdisorders.org.uk). This document pulls together information that is male orientated.

It is very unlikely that the cause of developing an eating disorder maybe down to a single reason. It is much more likely to be a combination of many factors, in fact anything that may lower a person's self esteem, bullying, family relationships, problems with friends, problems with relationships, bereavement and loss of a job, to name a few.



Ref: Invisible - Professional Version [www.eatingdisordersresources.co.uk](http://www.eatingdisordersresources.co.uk)

## Over View of an Eating Disorder

The word Anorexia means **Loss of Appetite**  
The word Bulimia means the **Appetite of an Ox**  
Nervosa - is of the **Mind**  
An Eating Disorder is a **Mental Health Illness**

### **Anorexia (Restrictive)**

When someone restricts their diet to the point of starvation.

### **Anorexia Binge Eating Type**

Someone will restricts their diet for long periods of time and then eat huge amounts of food known as the 'binge' and rid themselves of that food by vomiting, laxative abuse or diuretics known as the 'purge' or through exercise as a way of controlling body weight and shape.

### **Anorexia Athletica**

More common in males who restrict their diet but exercise obsessively as a way of losing weight and 'perfecting' their body shape.

### **Bulimia**

When someone vomits after meals as a way of controlling weight, but in addition may have binge episodes, using the binge as a coping strategy for something they feel they have no control over.

### **Binge Eating**

A person who binge eats does so as a coping strategy, using the binge, of high carbohydrates and sugary foods which raises the levels of serotonin at the base of the brain giving them a feeling of well-being. Once the binge has stopped, the sufferer feels self loathing and more often than not are at risk of obesity, causing other medical problems such as diabetes, heart problems or at risk of a stroke.

### **Compulsive Eating**

A person will eat food constantly 'grazing' on huge amounts of foods that in turn lead to weight problems and obesity together with other health problems related to obesity.

Research suggests that 10% of adults who have eating disorders are men and that in children the figure may be as high as 25%. It seems that many of the risk factors that exist for women are equally applicable in men - in particular the role of an eating disorder as a coping mechanism for, and expression of, underlying emotional distress.

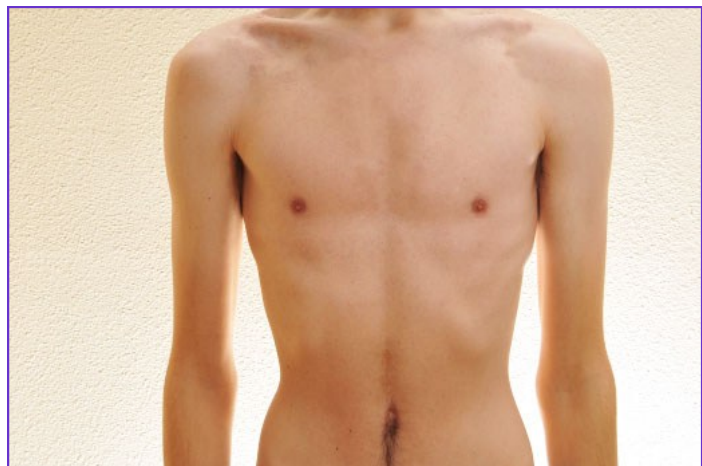
## Affects on the Body - (Anorexia and Bulimia)



**Affects on the Body due to Anorexia Nervosa**

- Poor hair and skin condition: hair brittle and thin; skin dry and spotty; growth of fine body hair
- Irrational thought patterns and lack of concentration
- Depression
- Heart (low blood pressure), slow heart rate, palpitations and heart failure
- Blood - anaemia and blood problems
- Muscle weakness and swollen joints
- Kidney stones and failure
- Low potassium, magnesium and sodium
- Constipation and bloating
- Hormones - erection dysfunction

- Depression, anxiety, dizziness, shame and low self-esteem
- Swollen cheeks
- Mouth ulcers, teeth erosion, tooth enamel loss, sore throat
- Ruptured oesophagus, blood in vomit
- Muscle fatigue
- Stomach ulcers, pain and delay in emptying
- Anaemia
- Irregular heart beat, heart muscle weakness, heart failure and blood pressure
- Dehydration, low potassium magnesium and sodium
- Erection dysfunction



**Affects on the Body due to Bulimia Nervosa**

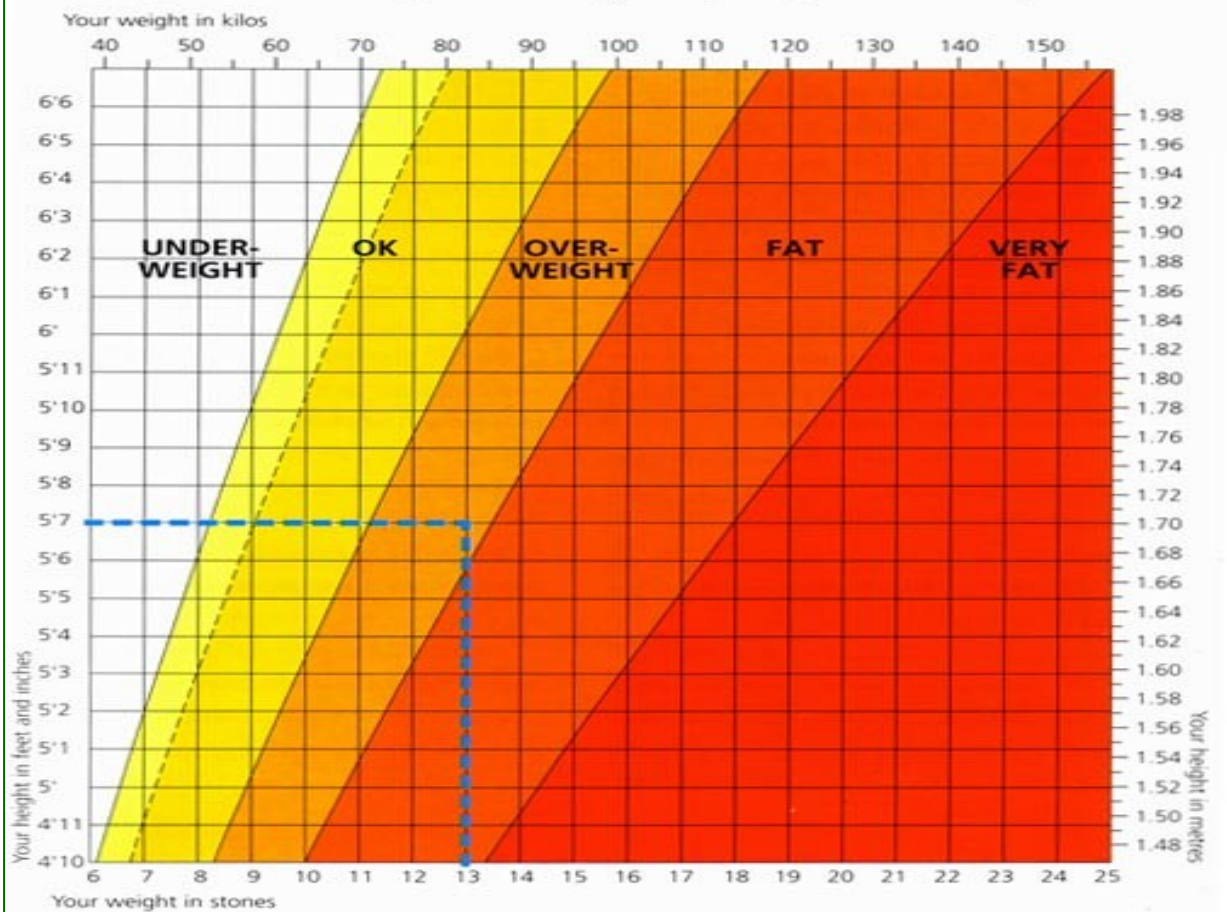
## How Compulsive Eating Affects Your Body



**Affects on the Body due to Binge or Compulsive Over-eating**

- Stroke due to high blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Liver enlargement
- Kidney stones and kidney failure
- Diabetes
- Joint problems especially arthritis
- Varicose veins
- Gallstones, gall bladder and cancer
- Armpits - sweating
- Snoring and disturbed sleep patterns
- Sleep apnoea

## Are you the right weight for your height?



## No Body Is Perfect

- Men do worry about what they look like, but some of their concerns differ from those of women. Baldness is something which affects more men than women and many men want to look muscular and strong. Although many men may believe that it is better to be appreciated for character rather than appearance, they may well worry about what their appearance says about them.

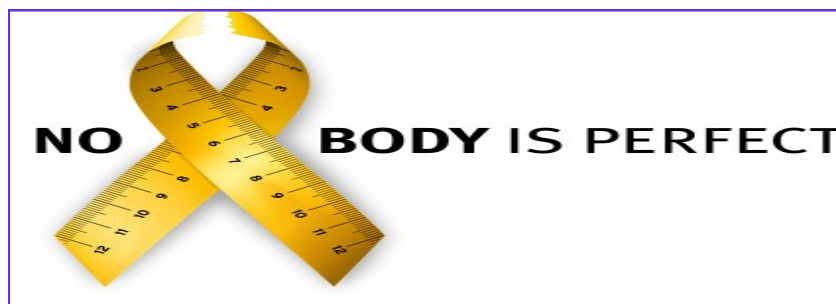
The stereotype for men is a muscular lean body. Those men who don't fit this societal norm tend to feel inadequate. Some men who are not muscular feel inadequate and try to build themselves up. Few men meet the ideals of the role models presented by the media. By striving for the perfect body, they may drive themselves beyond normal fitness into compulsive exercise. Exercise can become addictive. It then ceases to be a choice. It becomes something people have to do, even though it may be ruining their health.

- For some people, the concept of male sexuality is linked to appearance.

Often the first information we perceive about a person is about the shape of a their body and how they dress. From that we often make assumptions about their fitness and health, values, lifestyle, behaviour and sense of self. Body piercing, tattoos, hair and clothes are all ways in which a man can make a statement about who he is. However, looks can deceive. What you see is often not what you find when you take the trouble to really get to know someone.

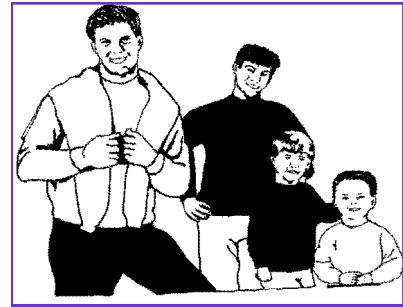
There is prejudice against larger men, which can result in bullying and teasing, which will erode self esteem. Weight is not just about self control. It is influenced by other factors including genetic make up and lifestyle.

- Many people confuse weight with fatness. If a man wants to be in better shape, "dieting" is not the answer. None of the "diets" work. "Dieting" makes you fat.
- Men who engage in sports that demand thinness or have weight categories and men with careers that demand thinness or conformity to a physical ideal, for example, male models or dancers, may be more at risk of developing an eating disorder than those who do not. The prevalence of eating disorders in the gay community is significantly higher than in the general population.



## Puberty and Manhood

- Some men who are not very muscular, may develop the reverse of anorexia nervosa. They cannot be big enough and resort to unhealthy and potentially dangerous methods to build themselves up. They are likely to become addicted to exercise, pushing themselves beyond the limits of their body and often sustaining injuries.



- Boys and girls are fairly similar in body shape until the onset of puberty, when they gain weight and body fat. This is critical for the production of reproductive hormones. Girls gain approximately 18 - 24 % body fat which tends to be stored around the hips and thighs. Boys tend to gain about 14 - 18% body fat and it is stored more evenly in lean muscle mass, but some boys put pubertal fat on their hips and chest and this can evoke teasing, which is likely to erode their self esteem.
- In general men will accept a higher weight than women if they are happy about their shape. Boys who develop early and become muscular are probably less likely to have problems than girls who start to develop the shape of a woman early, with a bust and wider hips.
- Males with eating disorders struggle with many, if not all, of the issues that females do. They are affected by societal messages and expectations which are impossible for them to live up to. They want to act like "real men", but are confused as to what that means. They are required to be physically strong and yet tender, sensitive and caring.
- Men respond equally well to treatments and approaches to recovery as women - if they feel able to admit that they have an eating disorder and seek help. Asking for help is difficult enough for women with eating disorders, but so much harder for a man as some people hold an illusion that eating disorders are female illnesses. It is also more likely that his condition and symptoms will not be taken seriously.





## Libido and Eating Disorders

**Males with an eating disorder may not move forward into manhood in just the same way as a female may not move forward into womanhood.**

It is often one of the reasons people develop the eating disorder in the first place.

“What does it mean to move forward into adulthood, is that a scary place to be?”

“What are other peoples expectations?”

“Will I be expected to achieve at all costs?”

“I don't like the thought of being independent - it scares me”

If someone restricts their diet and are at the stage of being very underweight the female will not produce oestrogen and have periods and a male will not produce testosterone (hormones) and be unable to move forward to being sexually active.

Hence a female may not be fertile whilst at a low weight and a male may encounter impotence (failure to have an erection).

Once weight increases and a more established eating pattern achieved, periods and libido return to being fully functional.

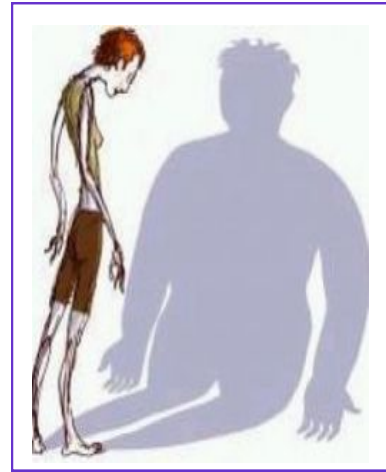
The reasons given above are do to chemical imbalances, but one of the side effects of anorexia and low weight is depression and this too may have an impact on a persons ability to function sexually.



## In Fitness and In Health

### To be fit and healthy:

- Aim for a healthy balance in food, exercise and indeed in life and trust your body to maintain its normal equilibrium. Remember that normal eating can be fun and tasty and also include some treats. It takes up some of your time and attention, but doesn't dominate your life.
- Get moving... Be active every day. Keeping fit helps your muscles to work well (and that includes your heart), gives you energy and helps to prevent us gaining too much weight. To stay fit you should try to include one hour of moderate exercise each day. That **doesn't** mean you **have to** work out at the gym. There are lots of forms of exercise including: swimming, cycling, skipping, dancing, football, netball and cricket. Don't forget walking - an exercise you can do anywhere, however little time you have. Remember that balance is important - not too little and not too much. **Over-exercise** is harmful.



### Some benefits of exercise:

- Physical exercise can improve both your mental and physical health
- Exercise improves muscle strength and flexibility and tones the body
- Exercise pumps more blood through your veins. This increases the size of your arteries, prevents fat from clogging your arteries and helps prevent blood clots
- Exercise strengthens the heart reducing the likelihood of heart attack
- Regular exercise increases your HDL (good) cholesterol and helps lower your total cholesterol
- Exercise helps to lower blood pressure
- The lungs benefit from exercise
- Exercise can also help to alleviate stress
- A combination of exercise and a healthy diet will enable the maintenance of a healthy weight for your body

### Dangers of over-exercise:

- Some people with eating disorders also **over-exercise** to lose more weight and to get a drug like "high" as their body produces endorphins (naturally occurring morphine like substances, which give a high - like a shot of heroin)
- This can become addictive, with the person forcing themselves to exercise, rather than doing other things they enjoy
- The combined effects of the eating disorder and over-exercise are dangerous, resulting in dehydration and also affect the heart, muscles, kidneys and bones

## Keeping Safe and Taking Those Steps on the Road to Recovery

### Keeping Safe Medically

If a person has been diagnosed with an eating disorder and they are engaging in services for psychological problems, it is very important that the sufferer is monitored medically. Your GP has a duty of care to ensure you are not medically at risk.

Any form of purging may mean there is a problem. Purging prevent the body absorbing vitamins and minerals that are needed to stay healthy and ensure the heart is not at risk due to a chemical imbalance of potassium. Please see the tri-fold Keeping Safe and What You Should Know, available via the website under downloads (Category 2: Medical Risk).

### Seeking Treatment

**An eating disorder is a complex illness to treat and one that has a profound psychological impact on anyone who is part of their life.**

**People do get better from an eating disorder but this may take a long time. Recovery can take anything from two to seven years**

**The services you receive may very much depend on your area of residence and geographical location.**

**If you live in the Hull or East Riding area, please see our website for “A Guide To Seeking Help and Support Within Hull and East Riding. This can be found under downloads (Category 7: Services and NHS Related Information).**

Self help can play an important part in the recovery of a patient. See [www.seedeatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.seedeatingdisorders.org.uk) for more details. However it is important the services via Self Help should be part of the network of care and in no way in place of care that should be provided by the NHS service.

**Don't Suffer In Isolation  
Ring the Helpline (01482) 718130 for Support Today!**

