

UNDERSTANDING DISORDERS

# WHAT ARE EATING DISORDERS?

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# AT A GLANCE

- Eating disorders affect about 28.8 million people in the United States. These disorders affect physical and mental health.
- Many factors can increase the risk of developing an eating disorder. Certain genes and personality types are risk factors. Stress also plays a role.
- People with anorexia nervosa severely limit the amount of food they eat. This leads to an unhealthy amount of weight loss that can harm physical health.
- People with bulimia nervosa binge eat. They also purge, or do behaviors to get rid of calories. Vomiting and taking laxatives are purging behaviors.
- Binge eating is the main symptom of binge eating disorder. People with this disorder eat large amounts of food in a short period of time.

# NOTABLE EATING DISORDERS

**E**ating disorders affect about 28.8 million people in the United States. This is about 9 percent of the population. Some eating disorders are more common in females. But males suffer from them too. Many people believe **stereotypes** about eating disorders. They may think that all people with eating



***It can be difficult for boys and men to receive an eating disorder diagnosis due to stereotypes.***

disorders are white females. Many studies focus on this part of the population.

Stereotypes can make it difficult for men to receive the right diagnoses. They may prevent men and boys from getting help.

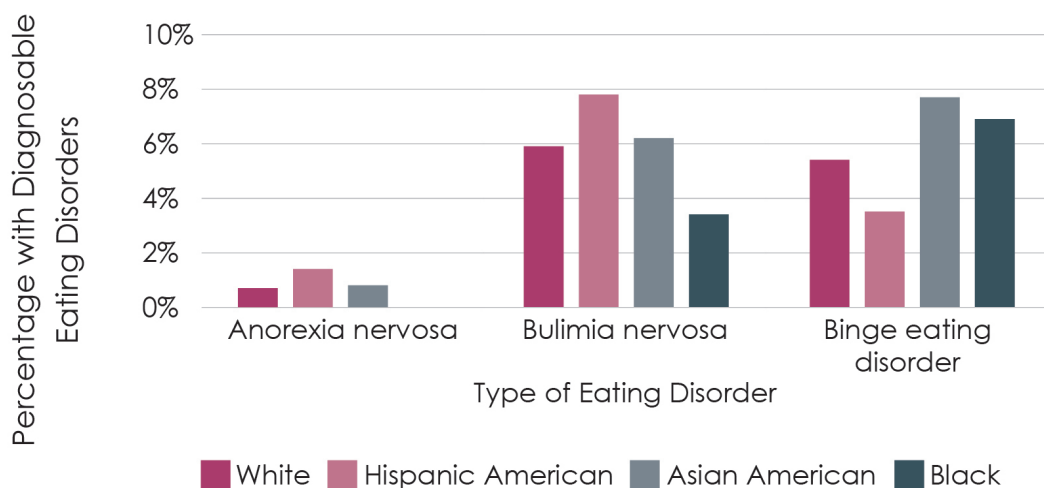
Dr. Jason Nagata is a doctor and researcher at the University of California, San Francisco. He said, “A lot of boys and men go unrecognized, and they have delays in getting care.”<sup>3</sup>

People of color also suffer from eating disorders. Black teens are 50 percent more likely than their white peers to suffer from bulimia. Hispanic people are also more likely

### **A GLOBAL ISSUE**

Eating disorders have been diagnosed in most areas of the world. Japan, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and the United States are just a few of the nations that have seen an increase in eating disorders in recent decades.

# Rate of Eating Disorders Among Women of Different Races



*Source: Zhen Hadassah Cheng et al., "Ethnic Differences in Eating Disorder Prevalence, Risk Factors, and Predictive Effects of Risk Factors Among Young Women," NCBI, January 2019. [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov).*

***A 2019 study looked at the rates of eating disorders in 848 white women, 141 Hispanic women, 130 Asian women, and 58 Black women.***

to suffer from this disorder. But doctors are less likely to ask people of color about eating behaviors. This can make it difficult for them to receive treatment.



# GLOSSARY

**calories**

units of measuring how much energy a food provides

**compulsive**

relating to a strong urge or need

**fasting**

eating little or nothing at all for a period of time

**hormone**

a chemical produced in the body that influences body and brain functions

**laxatives**

medications that cause bowel movements

**psychiatrist**

a doctor who diagnoses and treats mental health conditions

**stereotypes**

oversimplified beliefs about a group of people

**stigma**

a societal attitude about something that creates shame around it and makes people feel embarrassed to be associated with it



# SOURCE NOTES

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# FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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