

Anorexia



This factsheet provides bullet points of anorexia, its symptoms and the treatments and support options.

General symptoms of anorexia

- Serious and persistent weight loss
- Amenorrhea (cessation of periods, usually as a consequence of the weight loss)
- Starvation leads to possibility of severe infection and metabolic disturbances
- Constipation
- Abdominal pain
- Cold intolerance
- Lethargy
- Hypotension (low blood pressure)
- "Lanugo" (fine hair on the trunk and back of the body)
- Osteoporosis

Behavioural symptoms of anorexia

- Very restrictive diet, usually limited to a few food types only
- Avoiding meals
- Preparing food for rest of family without eating oneself
- Abuse of laxatives
- Increased exercise, often vigorous exercise

Psychological symptoms of anorexia

- Fear of gaining weight or becoming fat
- Self worth is connected to weight, ie weight loss is viewed positively, even euphorically, as an achievement; weight gain is experienced as an agonising failure of self control
- Distorted body image (perceive body to be larger than it is)
- Preoccupation with thoughts of food
- Preoccupation with calorie-counting every item of food
- Concerns, anxieties, fears about eating in public

People with anorexia may also experience

- Perfectionism
- Inflexible thinking
- Limited social spontaneity

When seriously underweight, people may experience depressive symptoms, eg low mood, social withdrawal, irritability, insomnia, decreased sex drive.

SANE, St Mark's Studios, 14 Chillingworth Road, Islington, London, N7 8QJ T: 020 3805 1790

W: <http://www.sane.org.uk>

SANE (limited by guarantee) Registered Company Number: 2114937 Registered Charity Number: 296572

Treatment for anorexia

Long-term psychotherapy or counselling is generally needed to help the individual understand the factors underlying and contributing to their condition, and to address the anxieties and fears they associate with food, eating and weight gain. Hospitalisation may be necessary in extreme cases.

Where can I find help and support?

SANE provides emotional support to anyone affected by mental health problems, including families, friends and carers. Using our database, we can also offer support in considering other options for help, including local services and agencies.

One-to-one support:

- Helpline: 0300 304 7000 (4.30pm – 10.30pm every day)
- Email: http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/email/
- Textcare: http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/textcare/

Peer support:

- Support Forum: http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/supportforum/

Details can be found on our website at www.sane.org.uk

SANE, St Mark's Studios, 14 Chillingworth Road, Islington, London, N7 8QJ T: 020 3805 1790

W: <http://www.sane.org.uk>

SANE (limited by guarantee) Registered Company Number: 2114937 Registered Charity Number: 296572