Anorexia

Anorexia is an illness in which people have difficulty with their body perception. They often see themselves as fat even though they may be dangerously thin. They have intense fears of gaining weight. Often they weigh themselves several times per day. They often exercise compulsively and constantly starve themselves. As a result, they take in far too few calories to sustain themselves. Many anorexics do not realize there is a problem. Often, if a problem is recognized, it is rationalized or denied.

Because of the constant state of starvation, **many other medical problems surface**. Some of the problems seen include:

- The salts or ions in the blood get off kilter *(electrolyte imbalance).*
- Fatigue and loss of mental acuity.
- The calcium density in the bones is lost (*osteoporosis*). This leads to weaker bones which are easier to break.
- Loss of menstrual cycles (*amenorrhea*).
- Abnormally low heart rate. Cardiac problems often result in death.
- Inflammation of the colon (*colitis*).

TREATMENT

Many different therapies are used for anorexia. Not all therapies work the same for all people. This is much the same as the differences seen in people using different medications for the same problem. Help is available, however.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You or a loved one is suspected of having anorexia. It is necessary to obtain medical help.

Anorexia can be a fatal disease. It **should not be neglected**. It will not get better or go away on its own. Almost 1 person in 6 with anorexia will die of the illness or commit suicide. This is a psychiatric disorder. Counseling can help with an illness that can be devastating. Your caregiver can guide you to proper information and treatment sources for this.

Above all, **do not feel alone.** Many people suffer with this disorder. There are caregivers to help you conquer this. **You will feel better.**

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