



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS & YOUTH

YOUNG MEN & DISORDERED EATING

Disordered eating is often seen as a women’s and girls’ problem. But the truth is that men and boys are just as vulnerable to pressure from the media and society to have “perfect” bodies.

10% of people living with an eating disorder are men and boys. They may struggle with emotional issues, such as difficulty controlling their emotional impulses, feeling anxious in public, and avoiding their feelings. They may feel pressure from other guys to put on muscle and lose fat to achieve an ideal “mesomorphic” physique—the stereotypical V silhouette.

Young men are less likely than young women to discuss changes to their bodies with friends and family. If they have difficulty discussing their bodies, it can leave them unprepared for a society that promotes and values tall, muscular bodies as the “male ideal.” Anxieties about being “too small” may lead them to turn to steroids or other dangerous drugs to build muscle mass.

We often overlook the ways media and advertising make men feel insecure about their bodies—a male model’s body can be manipulated with computer software to make it look more muscular just like a female model’s body might be changed to make it look thinner. Similarly, commercials for typically “men’s” products often show tall, lean, muscular men, even when the product has nothing to do with muscles or fitness.

A muscular physique is presented to men in the same way a thin physique is to women—ideal, but impossible to achieve.

Did you know?

MEN’S DISORDERED EATING MORE OFTEN INVOLVES OVER-EXERCISING, BINGEING, AND PURGING INSTEAD OF RESTRICTING FOOD INTAKE.



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Did you know?

FOR SOME MEN, STRUGGLES WITH PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS CAN LEAD TO LOW SELF-ESTEEM AND BINGE EATING.

Warning signs

No one is immune from disordered eating. Boys and men are just as vulnerable as girls and women. Know the signs:

- **Over-exercising**
- **Social withdrawal**
- **Depression**
- **Irritability**
- **Obsession with body weight and physique**

What can I do?

Understand how the media and advertisers influence social and cultural perceptions about men's ideal body image and masculinity.

Recognize how men's bodies are shown as ideal in children's cartoons, toy action figures, and video games.

Rather than conforming to society's focus on physical characteristics, value the internal qualities that make men attractive—integrity, caring, and thoughtfulness.

How do I know if I'm at risk?

- 1 You were overweight as a child or you were teased about your size.
- 2 You are dieting, skipping meals, or using weight-loss products.
- 3 You participate in a sport in which competition is based on weight classes (like boxing or wrestling) or a particular body type is needed in order to be competitive. Runners, swimmers, figure skaters, gymnasts, and jockeys are at higher risk of anorexia and bulimia, while weightlifters often focus on getting bigger (known as "bigorexia").
- 4 You have used steroids or dietary supplements to control weight and gain muscle.
- 5 You have a job or profession that values appearance and a certain type of physique, such as modelling or acting.
- 6 You have a family history of certain diseases (such as diabetes or heart disease) that you are trying to avoid.
- 7 You have survived a traumatic event such as an accident, death of a loved one, or abuse—physical, emotional, or sexual.

For more info
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Jessie's Legacy is proud to be affiliated with HeretoHelp. HeretoHelp is a project of the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information, a group of non-profit agencies providing good-quality information to help individuals and families maintain or improve their mental well-being. The BC Partners are funded by BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority.