

“Truth or Myth?”

- 1. The causes of eating disorders are complex and involve social, psychological and genetic factors.**
- 2. Eating disorders are most common among teens and young adults.**
- 3. The three most common eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating.**
- 4. People with anorexia or bulimia may over exercise.**
- 5. There are no cases of males with eating disorders.**
- 6. Treatments of eating disorders involve several different health professionals.**
- 7. Eating disorders can result in serious health consequences including death.**
- 8. Some athletes are susceptible to eating disorders due to their training regimens.**
- 9. Men are more likely than women to seek help for eating disorders.**
- 10. The pressures of a culture that promotes “thinness” and the “perfect body” contribute to causing eating disorders.**

“Truth or Myth?” Answer Key

1. The causes of eating disorders are complex and involve social, psychological and genetic factors.

True: Eating disorders are complex conditions that arise from a combination of long-standing behavioral, emotional, psychological, interpersonal and social factors. These include but are not limited to low self esteem, feelings of inadequacy, troubled family relationships, history of abuse, cultural pressures, biological causes and others. (Causes of Eating Disorders Fact sheet from the National Eating Disorders Association, http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage_ID=337)
2. Eating disorders are most common among teens and young adults.

True: Nine out of every 10 cases are found among girls and young women. (Eating Disorders Information for Middle School Personnel from the Office on Women’s Health, 2000)
3. The three most common eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating.

True: The term “eating disorders” has come to mean anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating. However, there are many lesser known eating disorders such as anorexia athletica (compulsive exercising), night-eating syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, Pica and others. (ANRED: Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders, Inc., www.anred.com)
4. People with anorexia or bulimia may over exercise.

True: Over exercising is when someone feels driven to exercise as a way to burn calories from food that he or she has just eaten. People with anorexia or bulimia may over exercise. (Eating Disorders Information Sheet from the Office on Women’s Health, 2000)
5. There are no cases of males with eating disorders.

False: Males account for 5 to 10 percent of bulimia and anorexia cases (One the Teen Scene: Eating Disorders Require Medical Attention, www.fda.gov) Approximately 10% of eating disordered individuals coming to the attention of health care professionals are male (Research on Males and Eating Disorders fact sheet from the National Eating Disorders Association, http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage_ID=285)
6. Treatments of eating disorders involve several different health professionals.

True: Typically care is coordinated by a licensed health care professional including but not limited to a psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, nutritionist/dietician and/or medical doctor. Treatment may include, individual, group or family therapy and medical management. Support groups, nutritional counseling and psychiatric medications under careful medical supervision have also proven helpful for some. (Treatment of eating disorders fact sheet from the National Eating Disorders Association, http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage_ID=320&Profile_ID=41139)

7. Eating disorders can result in serious health consequences including death.
True: If untreated, eating disorders may become chronic and lead to severe health problems, even death. About 1,000 people die of anorexia each year according to the American Anorexia/Bulimia Association. Other health consequences include: slowed growth and development, wasting of muscle tissue, drop in blood pressure and pulse rate, body organs shrivel, bone density decreases and symptoms of osteoporosis may occur, and others. (Nutrition and Fitness, 2000)
8. Some athletes are susceptible to eating disorders due to the demands of their sport.
True: Specific population groups who focus on food or thinness such as athletes, models, culinary professionals as well as young people are at risk for developing an eating disorder (American Dietetic Association's position paper on eating disorders) Gymnastics, cheerleading, dancing, figure skating, diving, swimming, track, wrestling and equestrian sports exert the most risk due to the weight and appearance demands placed on the athletes. (Position of Eating Disorders Awareness and Prevention, Inc. and the American Anorexia/Bulimia Association, adapted in 1994)
9. Men are more likely than women to seek help for eating disorders.
False: Many men deny they have a problem or are too embarrassed to get help. (*Not for Women Only, Men Too Can Fall Victim to Eating Disorders.* Article by Felicity Stone, HealthScoutNews Reporter, 2001)
10. The pressures of a culture that promotes "thinness" and the "perfect body" contribute to causing eating disorders.
True: Cultural values that glorify "thinness" and place value on the "perfect body" have been identified as contributing to eating disorders. (Causes of Eating Disorders Fact sheet from the National Eating Disorders Association, http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/p.asp?WebPage_ID=337)