

11 January 2008

By: Stefan Anitei, Science Editor



Top 4 Eating Diseases

From obesity to polyphagy

Any person has an ideal weight depending on sex, age, and the general shape of the body. Bit food disorders can affect severely this, and also the emotional state. An adult consumes on average 14 kg (30 pounds) of food per week. We need food to ensure the function of our organs (like heart and liver) development and remaking of tissues and fight infections. The adult body needs about 2000-3000 calories daily, a woman about 2200 and a man 2700, but the necessities differ from individual to individual, this depends on metabolism, physical effort, body type (endomorph, ectomorph or mesomorph). The amount of energy consumed by a person making physical work or by an athlete is double compared to a person working on an office. A newborn has a double necessity of food compared to an adult, related to its size, because it grows rapidly. The newborn needs more vitamins and minerals for combating infections menacing its life. Researches point that the left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is supposed to regulate eating behavior and to be dysfunctional in eating disorders.

1. Obesity. If we consume food (energy) in excess, this deposes as fat, and we gain weight. When it's in shortage of "energy", the fat will be burned, and we lose weight. Any person bypassing by 20 % the ideal values for weight is considered obese. In US for example, one third of the adults are obese. A similar situation is found in most developed countries.

Obesity can cause cardiovascular issues, heart attack, stroke, diabetes and kidney failure. In men, obesity cut short life by 25 % and in women by 16 %. In extremely RARE cases, obesity can be caused by a medical issue: hyposecretion of the thyroid gland, hypersecretion of the adrenal glands, or genetic syndromes causing hormonal impairment or increasing appetite. Obesity is partially genetic: in some families, most members can be obese or overweight, being due to a low metabolism. But in many cases (including those general in families) it can be about bad food habits, like consuming foods rich in fats and sugars, or a lot of sweets, biscuits, snacks and chocolate between meals, plus sugar rich beverages, beer and wine. Emotional factors can boost obesity. Depressed people can find comfort in food. The new proportions can cause depression and they will eat more because of this, turning increasingly fatter. The cycle of fattening/depression autofuels itself. An obese person must change food habits for losing weight. A nutritionist can recommend personalized diets and healthy food habits. Less food and exercising will "melt" the fat. By increasing muscle mass, they will slim further, as the muscle is an energy consumer tissue even during pause, unlike fatty tissue, which is quite inert. Hunger and severe diets do not work. At the beginning, the body burns deposited sugars, not desired fats. Severe hunger also causes a loss of essential vitamins and minerals. After the diet is ended, the persons usually gain back the lost weight and even more...

2. Anorexia (usually nervous anorexia) is a severe food condition, affecting especially youngsters aged 11 to 30, and more often girls than boys. Many say these girls are afraid of adulthood and sexuality. While their body is maturing, they refuse the adult world, turning to the sexless look of the children. Some girls follow severe diets for accentuating their sexual confidence. They think their exaggerated slimming makes them more attractive, ignoring the contrary. The superficial image of thin bodies promoted by mass media can turn anorexic even youngsters that are not overweight. Normal persons following a diet can choose when to stop and consider the diet as unpleasant. But this is not the case of the anorexic people. Anorexia cannot be detected immediately. It can cause alternations of diarrhea and constipation. Blood circulation turns difficult and sensitivity to infections increases. The behavior is changed: the person turns socially withdrawn, and school problems can appear. The main sign of anorexia is weight loss, but also hair loss, dry skin and osteoporosis; nails stop growing and a feeling of being

overwhelmed sets in. In women, menstruation turns irregular and can even disappear for months; menopause installs early and spontaneous abortions can occur. Anorexia can also cause colitis and turn the metabolism upside-down. Anorexia endangers your life. 10% of the anorexic women die because of an organic failure or other issues linked to anorexia. Perhaps the most famous case of death by anorexia is that of Karen Carpenter (from "The Carpenters") in 1983. Anorexic persons can mimic they eat normally. Because anorexia is a mental disease, counseling and psychiatric work is needed.

3. Bulimia is a condition in which the person, instead of fasting, crams even 15,000 calories in two hours' time. The person eats 3 to 30 times the normal amount of food. Then, the person eliminates what she/he ate, by vomiting or taking laxatives/diuretics, or executes difficult physical exercising for burning the extra-calories. Usually, the patient eats secretly, when its anxiety is calmed down, and, after consuming the food, experiences again the feeling of guilt. The wrong use of the laxatives can destroy the gut bacteria, provoking inflammations and infections. Frequent vomiting can provoke dehydration, tooth decay, esophagus lesions and even heart insufficiency. Usually, those with bulimia have a normal weight or they are a little over weight. It affects especially women aged 15-24, and can be triggered/accelerated by stressful events, like insatisfaction or break-up, boredom or loneliness. Anxiety and bulimia are usually connected to low self esteem or a perfectionist character, with too high expectations from his/her own person. Teenagers, especially girls, are extremely sensitive about their looks and the simplest teasing about their body weight or speed of fat accumulation can trigger eating issues.

3. Polyphagy also implies a large intake of food, but the patient does not eliminate what he/she has eaten and that's why he/she can become overweight. Some of these patients fast or make rigorous physical exercising following eating sessions, thus managing to maintain their bodyweight, so that those around them do not realize they have a problem. After pigging out, these patients experience feelings of guilt and depression. Polyphagy can lead to diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and other conditions, also leaving deep affective scars. Here is a list of calories contained in some foods: _one celery: 20_a carrot: 30_a glass of dry red wine: 90_28 grams (one ounce) of cheese: 140_a cola can: 160_114 g of lean stake: 190_0.5 l of beer: 220_a cheeseburger: 320_half of avocado: 340_once ice-cream: 370_one pizza: 600.