



2 Longfellow Place

Suite 200

Boston MA 02114

David B. Herzog, M.D.

Director, Harris Center at MGH

Endowed Professor of Psychiatry

Eating Disorders: Warning Signs

Members of the fashion industry – modeling agents, designers, magazine editors, stylists, and models themselves – are on the front line with regard to early recognition of eating disorders in our community. Identifying and treating eating disorders early can lead to improved outcomes. Yet early detection of eating disorders can be challenged by the fact that eating disorder symptoms often involve private behaviors or secret thoughts and beliefs that are not apparent from the outside. Below, we list a number of the more common warning signs. While alone, none of the warning signs listed below indicates a definite eating disorder, each of these behaviors and attitudes, particularly in combination, may warrant clinical attention.

- Drastic change in eating or exercise patterns
- Skipping meals; eating very little; denying hunger
- Avoiding situations that involve food or eating
- Unusual food rituals or behaviors (cutting food into little pieces, pushing food around on plate without eating it, hiding food in napkin)
- Adherence to a very strict diet or rules about food/eating
- Obsessive counting of calories, carbohydrates, or fat grams
- Regularly eating large amounts of food without weight gain
- Tendency to go to the bathroom after eating
- Hiding food; eating in secret
- Extreme fears of gaining weight
- Severe dissatisfaction with body weight, shape or appearance
- Rapid weight loss
- Using extreme measures to lose weight (e.g., laxatives, diet pills, diuretics)
- Compulsive or driven exercise; inflexible exercise routine
- Talking about weight, shape, and/or food all the time
- Irritability, moodiness, depression
- Withdrawing from friends and/or activities
- Cuts and calluses on the back of the hands
- Dental enamel problems
- Wearing loose-fitting clothing to conceal weight loss
- Irregular or absent menstrual cycles
- Sensitivity to the cold

Questions or concerns? Contact the CFDA Health Initiative at info@cfda.com.