養和精神健康門診
HKSH Mental Health Clinic

Eating Disorders

The pursuit of beauty is human nature, and with societal trends favouring slimness, dieting and exercise have become almost universal practices for weight management. However, some individuals may suffer from eating disorders for pushing it too far.

Common Symptoms

Eating disorders are primarily categorised into anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

Anorexia Nervosa

Patients perceive themselves as overweight, even when they are noticeably thin to others. They persistently pursue weight loss through dieting, exercise, or even resort to laxatives and inducing vomiting. Most patients are female. Excessive dieting can lead to amenorrhea (cessation of menstruation), osteoporosis, malnutrition, and, in severe cases, life-threatening complications.

Bulimia Nervosa

Patients usually control weight through dieting but have intermittent episodes of uncontrollable binge eating (e.g., snacks, bread, etc.). And they will try to offset the binge by vomiting, using laxatives, fasting, or excessive exercise.

Causes

Genetics, personality traits, societal influences, and family factors.

Treatment

Non-medication treatments primarily involve cognitive-behavioural therapy. For anorexia patients, treatment first focuses on weight gain to break the unending cycle of “the thinner the better”, then shifts to rebuilding healthy eating habits. Serotonin-enhancing antidepressants may also be effective.

Happy Valley
Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital
3/F, Central Block
2 Village Road, Happy Valley, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2835 8497
Fax: (852) 2892 7451
Email: mhc@hksh-hospital.com
www.hksh-hospital.com

Central
HKSH Healthcare
1/F, 33 Des Voeux Road Central
Central, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2523 7887
Fax: (852) 2523 7873
Email: mhccn@hksh-healthcare.com
www.hksh-healthcare.com

North Point
HKSH Healthcare
3/F, The Tanner Hill
8 Tanner Road, North Point, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2219 9012
Fax: (852) 2892 7572
Email: mhcth@hksh-healthcare.com
www.hksh-healthcare.com

Patient feedback is incorporated

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