

# Quest 180°

Christ Centered Recovery

## The Warning Signs and Symptoms of Eating Disorders

### **Eating disorders can go undetected for several reasons:**

- It can be difficult to distinguish a warning sign or symptom from a consequence.
- Eating disorders are secretive by nature.
- Some warning signs (such as moodiness) can be consistent with normal adolescent development, making it difficult to distinguish an eating problem from normal behavior.
- Early detection can be improved by being aware of clusters of symptoms from behavioral, physical, social, and emotional or psychological categories.

People develop and experience eating disorders differently. Therefore, some people exhibit many of the following warning signs or symptoms, while others may exhibit only a few.

### **Emotional and psychological warning signs of eating disorders**

- preoccupation with body appearance or weight
- reduced concentration, memory, and thinking ability
- anxiety around meal times
- moodiness, irritability
- anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts
- guilt or self-dislike

### **Behavioral warning signs of eating disorders**

- dieting or making frequent excuses not to eat
- obsessive rituals such as drinking only out of a certain cup, or eating certain foods on certain days
- trips to the bathroom after meals
- overeating
- wearing baggy clothes, or a change in clothing style
- hoarding food

### **Social warning signs of eating disorders**

- social withdrawal or isolation
- decreased interest in hobbies
- avoidance of social situations involving food

### **Physical warning signs of eating disorders**

- weight loss or rapid fluctuation in weight
- edema (retention of body fluid, giving a "puffy" appearance)
- faintness, dizziness, or fatigue
- bowel problems such as constipation, diarrhea, or cramps
- reduced metabolic rate (can lead to slow heart rate, low blood pressure, reduced body temperature, and bluish-colored extremities); sensitivity to the cold
- hypoglycemia (low blood glucose levels), which can cause confusion, illogical thinking, coma, shakiness, and irritability
- changes in hair, skin, and nails (dry and brittle); dehydration
- loss or irregularity of menstrual periods (females)
- reduced concentration, memory, and thinking ability
- sore throat, indigestion, and heartburn

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