

Eating Disorders and their impact on our Kidneys

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Eating disorders are often conceptualized as a result of lifestyle related facts; however they are serious, fatal illnesses that cause distress and impact the overall health of an individual. **Bulimia Nervosa and Anorexia Nervosa** are classified as a severe psychological eating disorders which can rapidly turn life threatening. Bulimia Nervosa is characterized by binge eating or consuming large portions of food & then purging (vomiting) to be rid of calories and escape weight gain. Anorexia Nervosa on the other hand is characterized by extreme fear of gaining weight, and a strong desire to be thin, resulting in extreme food restriction, excessive exercise; this is followed by induced vomiting, or abuse of laxatives to promote weight loss.

Unfortunately, both Bulimia Nervosa and Anorexia Nervosa significantly impact the Kidneys. A person diagnosed with Bulimia is highly susceptible to develop painful Kidney Stones, and suffer long term Kidney damage. Anorexia on the other hand increases the risk of acute Kidney injury and Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD). Both starvation and cycles of bingeing & purging can lead to extreme vitamin deficiencies and electrolyte imbalance, this in turn disables the Kidneys, thus reducing their ability to remove toxins from the body. Also, Decreased fluid consumption leads to dehydration; when dehydration sets in, Kidneys begin to malfunction. This can trigger increase Blood Pressure, off-set the electrolyte balance, and allow toxins to build up in the blood stream. Continuous and severe dehydration along with malnutrition associated with the disorder, takes a serious toll on the Kidneys. In some serious cases, this could be extremely dangerous and the person could require a Kidney Transplant or have to be put on Dialysis.

Some of the other reasons of Kidney Damage may include:

OVERUSE OF MEDICATION: Many medical issues that are related to Bulimia and Anorexia may occur from the overuse

and abuse of medications. Easily accessible over-the-counter (OTC) medication that many people consume to induce vomiting, restrict the blood flow to the kidneys. Diuretic or 'water pills' aid in Kidney damage as they induce dehydration and increase vitamin deficiencies. Most people who suffer from Anorexia Nervosa are also addicted to Caffeine, Tobacco, Laxatives and Diuretics. Overall, un-prescribed medications and ruthless abuse of laxatives & diuretics not only deplete Kidney health but also aid weakening of the Heart muscles.

CO-MORBIDITIES: It has been clinically proven that individuals showcasing diabetes and hypertension are at an increased risk of developing Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD). Blood Pressure if not controlled can cause the Arteries around the Kidneys to harden. If the blood sugar levels are high, they damage the blood vessels in the Kidneys, and hence limit kidney function.

Even though the issue is a serious concern, there is hope and people suffering from these disorders should be open to seeking help and getting appropriate treatment. Many problems associated with Bulimia and Anorexia are reversible through timely intervention. Once diagnosed your doctor, a Mental Health expert, a Nutritionist, along with a close family member will come together to initiate treatment. Mental Health experts play a significant role in tackling Bulimia & Anorexia, they help you deal your emotional needs and can also help you take control of your eating. However, if one does not seek medical help in time, in some cases the damage maybe permanent.

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