



Eating Disorders

Forty percent of the adult population at any one time is on a diet and 60% to 70% of adolescent girls probably are too. The most important thing we need to understand as personal trainers is we cannot cure anyone with an eating disorder. Eating disorders have often been referred to as the old 'schizophrenia'. The only thing we can do as trainers is recognise there is a problem and initiate help.

Anorexia nervosa occurs most often in females between the ages of 12 and 21, but may occur in older women and men. For an adolescent with the disease, a combination of cognitive behavioural therapy and family therapy are the most effective.

- Fifty percent of all anorexics recover fully.
- Up to 20% of anorexics die by 20 years of age
- Each year, approximately one out of every 200 female adolescents becomes anorexic.
- The most vulnerable to this eating disorder are the ambitious, achieving girls between the ages of 12 – 25.
- At least 50% of Australian women are on some kind of diet at any given day of the year, and girls as young as 8 years old are also dieting to lose weight.
- The onset of the disorder is sometimes associated with a stressful life event.
- Anorexia is a loss of at least 15% of body weight resulting from refusal to consume sufficient food, despite extreme hunger.
- About 40% of people with Anorexia Nervosa will later develop Bulimia
- Approximately 5-10% of people with Anorexia Nervosa are male



How to recognise an eating disorder

- Rapid loss of weight
- Obsession with exercise
- often wearing baggy loose fitting clothing
- Obsession or pre-occupation with food
- Tired, vague and not interested in daily activities
- Excuses to not eat
- Keeps to themselves and spends a lot of time alone

If you recognise an eating disorder what can you do?

- Approach the subject with caution
- Make sure you are quite positive there is a problem
- Alert parents (if client is under 18 years) and determine if there is a problem. Remember they may not have any idea so your news will be daunting.
- Provide an avenue for the client to seek help with your support (offer doctors names, books, a time to chat anytime she needs it)
- For further information on eating disorders refer to the Nutrition for Children section in the manual.