

Orthorexia

What is Orthorexia? Orthorexia is not yet classed as an Eating Disorder within the DSM V which is a manual of specific criteria on how GP's diagnose ill Mental health including Eating Disorders. Orthorexia can be identified through an obsession with healthful or clean eating. It's important to be aware of the nutritional quality of food people who have Orthorexia are so fixated on 'healthy eating' that they damage their own wellbeing.

Societal pressures to be slim coined with praise for losing weight and 'being good with food' can be precursors to Orthorexia developing. A link has been found between individuals with orthorexia and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Warning signs of Orthorexia

Behaviours

- Compulsive checking of ingredient lists and nutritional labels
- An increase in concern about the health of ingredients
- The avoidance of certain food groups that society has deemed "unhealthy"
- Body image concerns may or may not be present
- A decrease in variety of foods
- Weight loss
- Refusal to eat food for which they are unclear about preparation or what it contains
- Refusal to eat food they have not prepared themselves
- Refusal to eat foods that weren't produced or prepared in a way they consider pure

Thoughts

- Spending hours per day thinking about what food might be served at upcoming events

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Orthorexia

Emotions

- Showing high levels of distress when 'safe' or 'healthy' foods aren't available
- Unusual interest in the health of what others are eating

Others

- Cutting out an increasing number of food groups (all sugar, all carbs, all dairy, all meat, all animal products)
- An inability to eat anything but a narrow group of foods that are deemed 'healthy' or 'pure'
- Obsessive following of food and 'healthy lifestyle' blogs on Twitter and Instagram
- Malnutrition

Orthorexia can damage the sufferer's health and wellbeing due to them not receiving the correct amount of nutrients in their diet due to cutting out entire food groups. The preoccupation with food and sometimes their body image can make life miserable. Often the sufferer and those around them don't realise that there is an issue as people with Orthorexia can be viewed as having good 'willpower' and caring about their bodies, however it can become abusive when their body is lacking key nutrients that it needs to function.

Sometimes Orthorexia can coincide with over exercise, this is where people push through injuries in order to ensure they have done the 'right amount' of exercise. If they do not go to the gym sometimes several times a day, they feel immense levels of guilt. Pushing through painful injuries is another sign that your relationship with food and your body is inappropriate.

People can also feel as though they are socially isolated due to increased anxiety around social situations they stop eating with family and friends, won't eat anything that they haven't prepared themselves. If you think you know someone with Orthorexia an eating disorder specialist should be able to assist you further with treatment options.

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