

Bulimia Nervosa

After coming home every night from a 3-hour workout at the gym, Jim sits in front of the television and eats for 4 hours. He eats large amounts of pizza, pasta, wings, cheese fries, and brownies. Towards the end of his binge, Jim feels intensely guilty and shameful for eating so much because he wants to lose weight. Before going to bed every night, he forces himself to vomit up as much food as he can.

Someone with **bulimia nervosa** may have an experience like the one above.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, “patients with bulimia nervosa have recurrent and frequent episodes of eating unusually large amounts of food and feeling a lack of control over these episodes. This binge-eating is followed by behavior that compensates for the overeating such as forced vomiting, excessive use of laxatives or diuretics, fasting, excessive exercise, or a combination of these behaviors. Unlike anorexia nervosa, people with bulimia nervosa usually maintain what is considered a healthy or normal weight, while some are slightly overweight. But like people with anorexia nervosa, they often fear gaining weight, want desperately to lose weight, and are intensely unhappy with their body size and shape.”¹

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, **signs and symptoms** of bulimia nervosa can include:

- Chronically inflamed and sore throat
- Swollen salivary glands in the neck and jaw area
- Worn tooth enamel, increasingly sensitive and decaying teeth as a result of exposure to stomach acid
- Acid reflux disorder and other gastrointestinal problems
- Intestinal distress and irritation from laxative abuse
- Severe dehydration from purging of fluids
- Electrolyte imbalance (too low or too high levels of sodium, calcium, potassium and other minerals) which can lead to heart attack¹

Bibliography

¹ The National Institute of Mental Health, "Eating Disorders." Accessed July 25, 2013. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/eating-disorders/index.shtml>.