

MYTH

A person with an eating disorder can be spotted by appearance.



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FACT

Individuals battling an eating disorder can hide their symptoms.

Some people battling bulimia nervosa are able to disguise their symptoms so well that they may suffer for months, years, or even a lifetime with no one realizing. While a person suffering from anorexia nervosa may be easier to identify, bulimia nervosa is harder to “see” because individuals often are normal weight or even overweight.

For other myths about bulimia nervosa, plus ECRI Institute’s evidence-based research findings on available treatments, tips for educators, easy-to-use checklists, and information on how to start a discussion with a student, friend, or family member, visit [BulimiaGuide.org](https://www.bulimiaguide.org).



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MYTH

Purging helps lose weight.



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FACT

Purging does *not* get rid of ingested food.

Approximately half of the food ingested during a binge episode actually remains in the body after self-induced vomiting. While laxatives can reduce weight through fluid and water loss, the effects are only temporary. For these reasons, many people with bulimia nervosa tend to be average or above-average weight.

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MYTH

All males who develop bulimia nervosa are athletes.



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FACT

Bulimia nervosa also develops in males who are not athletes.

While participating in certain sports may confer a greater risk of developing an eating disorder, males who are not athletes also develop eating disorders. Eating-disordered behaviors may be a way of attempting to control situations that feel out of control or beyond control.

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MYTH

Most people with bulimia nervosa purge by throwing up.



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FACT

Many forms of purging exist besides vomiting after eating.

The goal of purging is to empty the stomach or bowel contents to compensate for excessive food intake. Purging methods can include vomiting, enemas, laxative abuse, insulin abuse (if the individual is diabetic), fasting, and excessive exercise. All of these behaviors can be dangerous and lead to serious medical emergencies or even death.

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MYTH

Males who have an eating disorder tend to be gay.



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FACT:

Sexual orientation has little effect on developing an eating disorder.

Stereotypes surrounding male body image and gay men have perpetuated the idea that only homosexual males tend to develop eating disorders; but heterosexual men develop eating disorders, too. However, recent research suggests that individuals in the LGBTQ community show higher prevalence of eating disorders and a greater risk of eating-disordered behaviors than their non-LGBTQ peers, especially during teen years.

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