

# Anorexia Nervosa Progression

Contributed by Admin  
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Many eating disorders, like Anorexia, usually have a fatal outcome. Years of starvation can take its toll on the body, causing (among other things), and massive organ failure. When the line of personal safety has been crossed, there is only one option left to the individual: the body gives up the fight to live and death results.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association, Version Four, Text Revision, Anorexia Nervosa usually begins in mid to late adolescence. This is the time of life, especially for girls, when peer pressure to be thin is at its peak. Teenage girls can be merciless towards each other; "difference" is not tolerated. Adolescents, who are too smart, not dressed in the latest style, not athletic enough, not attractive enough and especially those who are overweight are shunned, ridiculed and endure endless taunts about their physical appearance. This is the time of life when "belonging" to a peer group is the most important thing in their existence. Adolescence, ages 14-18 years, is when excessive dieting can take over a young girl's life.

Anorexia seldom has an onset among women over age 40. If this does occur, it's usually in response to an excessive life stressor such as divorce, death of a loved one, or loss of a career. Regardless of the age on onset, anorexia begins with a single episode of failure to eat and intense exercise. Sometimes only this single episode occurs; when the precipitating stressor resolves, the sufferer returns to normal eating behavior. In other patients, other episodes occur over the next few years, again in response to stress including child abuse and neglect. As the child reaches adulthood, the disease is so firmly entrenched that it is repetitive rather than episodic.

When Anorexia Nervosa takes control of a person's life, it may already be too late to save the individual. By now, the person suffering from anorexia has taken on a skeletal appearance that the professionals in the health industry have dubbed "the undead". Years of excessive exercise and lack of much-needed nutrition weakens the heart, and the threat of a massive stroke or heart attack is imminent. The only thing you can do for an anorexic at this stage is to get him or her to a hospital as soon as possible.

The progressive course of Anorexia Nervosa, if untreated, is as follows: Cessation of menstruation, cold intolerance, lethargy, Osteoporosis (weakening of the bones), Petechiae (bleeding) on the arms and legs, development of lanugo, fine, downy body hair, severe dehydration and electrolyte depletion that is potentially fatal. Other progressive courses of Anorexia Nervosa are: severe anemia, irregular heartbeat, brain aneurism, pancreatitis (pancreas failure), jaundice (yellowing of the skin) due to liver failure (fatal), kidney failure (fatal), massive stroke (fatal), massive heart attack (fatal), and suicide.

Anorexia Nervosa is one of the most horrible ways to die. Each day, the body wastes away pound by pound. Family members are helpless, and many can only sit by and watch, filled with pity and frustration. Unlike a patient with a terminal illness, the anorexic does have a choice between life and death.