

## When to seek Medical Care for an Eating Disorder

There are several ways in which the body adapts to an eating disorder that are normal, however if restriction goes on for long enough or symptoms of bingeing and or purging are severe, the body can become medically unstable.

If you are restricting or bingeing and you have the following symptoms, go to the ER.

- Chest pain with activity or rest.
- Swelling in the ankles with shortness of breath a cough and chest pressure (like an elephant is sitting on the chest).
- Feeling lightheaded for hours.
- Any fainting.
- Irregular or rapid heart beats.
- Weakness or cramps of the legs, confusion, nausea and vomiting (low sodium or potassium- these symptoms only appear if these are very low).
- Any seizure like activity
- Any pain that does not resolve

If you are bingeing and purging and you have any of the above symptoms or following symptoms, go to the ER.

- Large amount of blood in the vomit or stool.
- Vomit that looks like coffee grounds.
- Black stools (if you are not on iron or taking pepto bismal which can discolor the stool).

## References

Mehler, P., Andersen, A. (2017). Eating Disorders: A Guide to Medical Care and Complications. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Johns Hopkins University Press. 2715 North Charles St. Baltimore Maryland

Mehler, P. (2020). Medical Complications of Eating Disorders . Up to date. Retrieved from [https://www.uptodate.com/contents/anorexia-nervosa-in-adults-and-adolescents-medical-complications-and-their-management?search=medical%20complications%20of%20eating%20disorders&source=search\\_result&selectedTitle=1~150&usage\\_type=default&display\\_rank=1](https://www.uptodate.com/contents/anorexia-nervosa-in-adults-and-adolescents-medical-complications-and-their-management?search=medical%20complications%20of%20eating%20disorders&source=search_result&selectedTitle=1~150&usage_type=default&display_rank=1)