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Dr. Stephen Wangen

Eating Disorders and Food Allergies

There are several physical, mental and emotional connections between eating disorders and food allergies. Eating disorders affect over 10 million people in the United States and an estimated 15 million people suffer from food allergies. Eating disorders and food allergies affect women, men, and young children. These staggering numbers are a call to action and there is a vast array of new research and approaches that promote true health and well being.

Anorexia nervosa is a serious, potentially life-threatening eating disorder characterized by self-starvation and excessive weight loss.

Bulimia nervosa is a serious, potentially life-threatening eating disorder characterized by a cycle of bingeing and compensatory behaviors such as self-induced vomiting or laxative use designed to undo or compensate for the effects of binge eating.

Binge eating disorder is characterized by recurrent binge eating without compensatory measures.

Orthorexia is not an officially recognized diagnosis but is a compulsion and obsession about eating healthy with a fixation on quality and purity.

Overweight is a Body Mass Index (BMI) between 25 -29.

Obesity is a BMI above 30. (17% of children and 34% of adults in the US are obese).

Many people find themselves in the spectrum of '**Disordered Eating**' indicating less clinical severity of obsessive thoughts and actions regarding food and body image. In addition, many people do not fit neatly into one diagnosis.

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The **IBS Treatment Center** is the nation's leading facility for the successful treatment of Irritable Bowel Syndrome
Mailing Address: 11300 Roosevelt Way NE, Suite 100 Seattle, Washington 98125

(206) 264-1111

www.IBSTreatmentCenter.com

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The disordered eating spectrum is complex and symptoms vary on an individual basis.

Biopsychosocial Connections

Food allergies and sensitivities interfere with the hormonal balance of the endocrine system, including the thyroid and adrenal glands. This makes it harder for the body to burn stored fat. It also disturbs insulin levels, signaling the body to convert food energy into fat and also contributing to hypoglycemia which increases cravings for food. Food allergies and sensitivities can cause mood chemistry disruptions. They cause depleted serotonin, leading to anxiety, depression and compulsive urges — all of which may trigger food restriction or overeating.

Chicken or the Egg?

A person with an undiagnosed food allergy or sensitivity may find relief as they begin cutting food groups out of their diet or purging after they believe they've eaten a 'bad/allergenic food'. Without professional help, they may have inaccurate assumptions about which foods are triggering their symptoms. They may avoid eating as long as possible to avoid the pain that comes with eating. They may struggle with self esteem, hating their body when they feel bloated after eating an allergenic food. As their body weight drops and/or their brains become malnourished, the eating disorder takes a stronger hold. Eating disorders feel like addictions, and what initiates an eating disorder may be different than what maintains an eating disorder. On the surface, eating disorders appear to be concern about food and body image. However, food and body image is just the tip of the iceberg. Eating disorders are unhealthy coping mechanisms that help people feel a sense of control in their life, deal with trauma or crisis or help them numb away their feelings. The underlying cause of the eating disorder, such as depression or anxiety, may be augmented by the biochemical effects of a food allergy. A restrictive eater may use a food allergy diagnosis to avoid eating. An overeater with a food allergy may be triggered by feelings of deprivation or resentment if they can't consume certain foods; feelings of deprivation often lead to emotional eating and binging.

Finding Relief

If you struggle with food allergies, eating disorders or disordered eating it is important that you find qualified specialists to support you on your journey to health and healing. Managing food allergies and recovering from eating disorders requires a combination of education, motivation and mental health support. Health and healing is a process that takes time and is not meant to be done alone, in isolation. Make a commitment to take your life back; the process of learning and listening to yourself will rejuvenate you. True health is wealth!

References and Resources

www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html

www.nationaleatingdisorders.org



The preceding article is courtesy of **Katie McKenna**, CN LMHC. As a certified nutritionist and mental health therapist, McKenna specializes in working with eating disorders, food allergies and sustainable weight loss for adults and teens. For more information about Katie and her services please visit www.mckennacounseling.com

Scrumptious Holiday Treats Cooking Class at Greenlake Nutrition

Thursday, December 15th, 6:30-8:30



Orange & Chocolate Coconut Clusters (gluten free)

Honey Roasted Pears with Balsamic Glaze (gluten free)

Festive Popcorn Peanut Balls

Almond & Goji Berry Thumbprint Cookies

Chocolate Green Tea Pudding (gluten free)

Cost is \$44 per person or \$75 for two if you register with a friend.
Class is held at Green Lake Nutrition, 6329 - 20th Ave NE, Seattle, 98115.
Class is limited to 6 participants for registration and information please.
call 206-729-5111 or email admin@greenlakenutrition.com to register.



FREE Upcoming Webinar from US BioTek Laboratories

“Food Allergies in Clinical Practice -- Q/A Session with Dr. Stephen Wangen, ND”

Thursday, December 15th, 2011
1:00 PM - 1:30 PM PST (4:00 PM - 4:30 PM EST)

Join Dr. Stephen Wangen and your hosts John Thoreson, *Director of Sales & Marketing* and Shalima Gordon, ND, *Director of Education & Client Service* for this FREE 30-minute Webinar.

During this session Dr. Wangen will share his clinical experience:

- Food allergy/sensitivity patient presentations that defy our classic understanding of how allergies look
- When to consider food allergy/sensitivity testing
- How to test your patients for food allergies/sensitivities
- The benefits of IgA vs. IgG vs. IgE with general work-up guidelines
- A few of his most interesting patient cases

Space is limited. Attendance is on a first-come basis. Pre-registration is not required.

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