

## WHAT ARE ANOREXIA NERVOSA AND BULIMIA NERVOSA?

**anorexia nervosa** literally means 'nervous loss of appetite'

**bulimia** (comes from the greek bou = 'ox' and limos = 'hunger')

### Characteristics

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Disorders (DSM IV)

### **ANOREXIA**

**Weight** – individual has weight less than 85% of weight expected

**Anxiety** – Intense fear of becoming fat although they are actually underweight

### **Body-image distortion**

– Thinking about weight and image is distorted (exaggerated importance of weight or not thinking about dangers of being underweight)

**Amenorrhoea** – absence of menstruation (no period for 3 consecutive months is an indication of anorexia)

(90% of cases are female / Usually occurs during adolescence / 5% die from disorder / Most common in middle-class individuals)

### **BULIMIA**

**Binge** - more food eaten within a two hour period than most people would consume in that time. Feeling of lack of control over eating.

**Purge** - Frequent behaviour that is inappropriate to stop individual from putting on weight. (self-induced vomiting, excessive exercise, going without meals, misuse of laxatives)

**Frequency** - Binge eating and compensatory behaviour (laxatives, vomiting etc) occur twice a week or more over a 3 month period.

**Body Image** - The individual's idea of themselves is dependent upon their shape and weight.

(Body weight is usually within 10% of normal weight but fluctuates / Age of onset usually around 20 / 50% more common in females than males)

Differences between disorders-

- Many similarities (many bulimic patients have a history of anorexia)
- Anorexics are striving for perfection / Bulimics striving to satisfy craving
- Anorexics at least 15% below normal weight / Bulimics within 10% of normal weight.

Both disorders are on the increase

Garner and Fairburn (1988) reported some figures from Canada for Bulimia :

No. of patients treated:

1979 = 15

1986 = 140

### **CULTURAL RELATIVISM**

Both eating disorders have been increasing rapidly in Western societies. (Cooper, 1994)

WHY?

Media portrayal of beauty as 'slim'.

