

## Can never decide what to eat. Anorexic? <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

I have a problem with food. I hate it and never know what I want to eat. Sometimes I'll be famished to the point of shaking, and I'll just lie there thinking about what to put into my body, sometimes for hours. I know I should eat something, and I really am hungry, but at the same time, nothing appeals to me. Is this a form of anorexia? Or could it be a symptom of stress, depression, etc.? I would really appreciate it if you could help me.

### Answer

Dear Reader,

Although eating disorders are often thought of as either anorexia or bulimia, not all problems with food fall neatly into these categories. Some individuals may have symptoms of anorexia or bulimia, but may suffer from an **eating disorder not otherwise specified (EDNOS)**. No matter what the diagnosis, seeking support can be helpful in understanding more about what you are experiencing.

Anorexia nervosa is characterized by an obsession with food, weight, and body shape that may be due to biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors. For more detailed information on anorexia, check out [Eating disorders vs. normal eating](#) <sup>[2]</sup> in the *Go Ask Alice!* Nutrition and Physical Activity archives. Although the diagnostic criteria for anorexia are quite specific, the criteria for EDNOS are not as clear-cut. According to the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, individuals with EDNOS may meet most of the criteria for an anorexia diagnosis, but could still be menstruating, or still weigh within the normal range. However, an EDNOS diagnosis may be as serious as a more specific eating disorder? those with EDNOS may suffer from the same psychological, physiological, and social effects as those with anorexia and bulimia.

You may want to ask yourself when you first began to hate food. Have you been under stress due to a major life change, i.e., a new school, job, or home? Have you been feeling pressure from the media and/or those around you to maintain a certain look? When in your life have you enjoyed food? Even if you aren't sure whether you have anorexia, a health care provider can help you figure out what's going on. You may also find it helpful to talk with a mental health professional.

All the same, feel proud that you took the first step in seeking information about problems with food. By learning about what may be going on, you can get the help you may need and,

eventually, be able to eat when you're hungry and stop when you're full.

To your health,

Alice!

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