

Eating Disorder

Christmas season – lent season?

Christmas time: This time of the year involves a lot of feasting, enjoying.....

More and more Germans discover the gourmet in themselves, prepare meals, bake cakes and conjure up what the market and their own creativity offers. Good idea even if the unnecessary extra kilos lurk in the back, if we enjoy too much fat and calories with our special meals. We will get rid of them with sports and good intentions at the beginning of the New Year.

Yet Christmas time with all its seductions is also a difficult time for many people suffering from eating disorders (e. g. anorexia, bulimia). 0,5 – 1% of all women suffer from anorexia once in their lifetime, men are less affected (approx. 10 times). In cases of anorexia the body mass index amount to 17,5 and less. People affected enforce vomitus (finger in the throat) take evacuants and believe to be too fat (a perturbed perception of themselves/their bodies). They even see themselves on pictures with their ribs showing under their skin and still feel much too fat. Before puberty the disease delays the development of the gender, the menstruation stays away, blood parameters derail, the mouth is inflamed (stomach acid in consequence of vomiting), the bone density decreases etc. It is difficult to achieve an understanding of the disease; patients are often extremely meritocratic (sports, school). In many cases the relations within the family system are disturbed. Anorexia can unconsciously contribute to the stability within the family system (“symptom carriers of the family”).

Sometimes the disease has the effect to feel one’s own power (all of a sudden one determines many things within the family, misinterprets the caring of others) or to become more autonomous. Only when the disease gets life-threatening (e. g. BMI <15) sanctions such as total parenteral nutrition have to be carried out in a hospital. These sanctions, however, will only be helpful for a short time. Patients should be motivated to attend a cognitive behavioral or a family therapy. Additionally depressions, anxiety disorders and compulsions have to be treated. In few cases the disease can indicate a possible schizophrenia or be part of a borderline-personality disorder. In advanced stages anti-depressants can ease the symptoms and heal concomitant disorders.

Bulimia nervosa means that the person affected constantly focuses on eating and sometimes greedily consumes incredible amounts of carbohydrates and fats (pizza, bread, cookies, ice cream, sweets) very quickly and then vomit afterwards. They abuse evacuants, dehydration tablets and then starve again. They set themselves very low, clear weight limits. Often depressions exist concurrently, later patients suffer from anorexia. A similar therapy as in cases of anorexia is recommended. The causes of the disease are unclear. Genes only seem to play a subsidiary role, early detection is important in order to avoid a development of a faulty body perception.

Comment: The BMI is easy to determine: Body weight divided with body height. Recommended BMI would be between 18,5 and 25 (kg(m²), higher than 30 would mean adiposity.