

**Bulimia** is a condition in which a person binges on a great amount of food and then gets rid of the food by purging in some way. The bulimic gorges herself (or himself) until she literally cannot feel anything. To prevent gaining weight from these binges she purges by vomiting, using laxatives or diuretics, fasting, or exercising compulsively. Why do people do this? The main reason given is a desire to maintain or lose weight and to avoid the anxiety that accompanies normal weight gain. They believe they regain control of their weight by purging themselves of food already consumed. The initial dangers of this condition are: dehydration from the use of laxatives and diuretics; teeth damage from the acids contained in the vomit; and the lack of necessary nutrients being released in the body. Longer-term, bulimia can cause malnutrition, which causes damage of the heart and other organs.

**Anorexia nervosa** is a nervous condition in which people (mostly females) starve themselves out of a fear of becoming overweight. Anorexia means "without appetite." Nervosa means "of the nerves." Anorexia nervosa is both a psychological and physiological condition. At least fifteen percent below the minimum expected weight for her (or his) ideal weight, the anorexic becomes petrified of gaining weight, or of even maintaining the minimum weight for her body type and height. This eating disorder is sometimes used by teenage girls to revolt against a controlling family or a perfectionist lifestyle. At first, teenagers enjoy the power of manipulating their bodies to new desired shapes. Somewhere in the midst of the weight reduction, they begin to believe that not only do they *want* to lose the weight, but that they *need* to. One sixteen-year-old anorexic explained: "It seemed that with each pound I lost, I grew in some way fatter, because I became more discontented with my body." Anorexia nervosa eventually results in malnutrition, the condition in which the body does not get enough of the nutrients it needs to function in a healthy way. Severe

anorexics are hospitalized and hooked up to IVs in order to get their bodies the nutrients they need. Anorexics must receive extensive psychological counseling in order to overcome the condition.

**Compulsive overeating** is similar to bulimia as regards binge-eating, except that the compulsive overeater does not purge himself (or herself) afterward like the bulimic. Instead, he feels great guilt and depression which usually leads him to eat more. This dreadful cycle causes obesity, a condition of excess fat in the body, which makes him feel even more unattractive and isolated from society, but at the same time numb from much of his painful feelings. The excess of carbohydrates in the body also induces a false and temporary sense of well-being, which the compulsive overeater tries to maintain by eating more and more throughout the day. Many health problems are related to obesity. Eating more food means that a person will take in more fat, salt, sugar, and cholesterol. Besides high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes, diseases related to obesity are: hernias, gallbladder and liver problems, arthritis, and the hardening of arteries.