

# Your Window to *Healthy Living*

► Fall 2010

## Health Matters

### Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are characterized by severe disturbances in eating behavior. They vary in type and degree but generally involve eating too little (anorexia), overeating, or eating a great deal too much then purging (bulimia). While the common thought is that eating disorders are about body image, more often than not it is something more than that. It is usually about control. All patients with eating disorders suffer from low self-esteem and a very distorted self image. Additionally, people with eating disorders often suffer from depression, anxiety and feelings of inadequacy and loneliness. Personal and family relationships may contribute as well. Many patients with eating disorders are victims of abuse, including physical, emotional or sexual. Controlling their bodies so severely gives them a sense of power they do not experience in other parts of their lives.

#### PHYSICAL EFFECTS

Eating disorders cause a great deal of damage physiologically as well as emotionally. When the body is denied the proper amount of nutrients, the neurotransmitters in the brain are impacted. The levels of serotonin and norepinephrine in your brain control your pituitary gland; the pituitary gland makes and releases hormones that help control the neuroendocrine system which manages emotions, physical development, memory and heartbeat. Improper diet slows the production of these crucial chemicals.

Additionally, your body will lose calcium contributing to bone loss. This happens as quickly as six months after the disorder begins. Blood pressure drops, skin becomes dry, hair becomes brittle and falls out, and brain shrinkage will begin. With the low blood pressure comes a slowed heartbeat. Severe cases will lead to heart failure.



Bulimics who purge do additional harm to their bodies while purging. The stomach acid that is regurgitated in the process of purging harms your teeth and can cause irreparable damage to your throat and esophagus. The use of diuretics and laxatives affect the levels of electrolytes in your body also contributing to lower blood pressure and heart rates.

#### HOW TO HELP

If you suspect a family member or friend has an eating disorder take them to the doctor for a physical exam. Do not ignore your suspicions; better to be wrong than to ignore what you suspect. Their doctor will be able to determine if their weight is healthy. If they do have an eating disorder, the doctor can recommend a program of treatment.

Be prepared for resistance and even anger when you speak to the patient about their problem. Be persistent with your concern and help.

Realize it is a complex disease that will require a lot of time, treatment and support. It is similar to alcoholism in the sense that it will be a lifelong battle for the patient to conquer the demons that took them down the path. Recognize that the sense of control they feel is a comfort to them, and try to provide other sources or means of comfort through good relationships and communication. Be consistent and reliable.

Treatment will include psychotherapy and nutritional counseling. Patients need to retrain themselves on how to eat appropriately and how to be healthy. Advanced cases will require hospitalization.

Keep the lines of communication open with your children or family members. Healthy happy relationships are one of the best preventions of eating disorders. Accept the medical condition that your child has and help them through it by providing support in every way you can. You can also get help by contacting a national organization.

Source: [Mamashealth.com](http://Mamashealth.com)



## Family Matters

# Getting a Back-to-School Head Start

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year” as the commercial that borrows from a popular Christmas song tells us regarding this time of year as children head back to school. Here are a few tips to make the process easier on everyone.

### FOR ALL AGES

Make sure you have a family calendar-and use it. Look through their clothes and shoes to make sure they have what they need and that what they have still fits and is in good shape. For younger students, talk about what they should expect. Listen to and soothe their worries and anxiety-remind them frequently that everyone is nervous and excited and they are not alone in the process.

### K – 5

Start a routine for bedtime and waking that you will follow during the school year. This is a great time to get them used to an alarm clock and give them a chance to get up on their own.

Utilize your school’s supply list if they provide one. Most office supply stores have amazing back to school sales. Stock up on things that your student will use up like paper, pencils and tissue.

For kindergarteners, walk them to the school so that they become familiar with the route thus making them more comfortable.

Talk to your kids about their school day-especially the younger ones. Let them share their days and soothe any of their worries they share.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL

For those beginning middle school, a bike ride or walk over to the school will calm any worries they may have-whether or not they admit them.

If your school provides an organizer, use it. Explain to your child what a useful tool this is- it is a crucial part of their success and this is a skill that will serve them for the rest of their lives.

If you know your child is struggling with a particular subject, speak to the teacher of that class ahead of time if possible. Ask them for recommendations



about how to help your student, and if they know of any tutors that can be hired for further assistance.

### HIGH SCHOOL

If your child is a freshman, once again visit the school with them if possible. The effect is the same-the unfamiliar becomes less so.

Juniors this is the time to determine when the college placement exams such as SAT and ACT will be given and preps your child. If they need test prep classes, enroll them now. Have them take the exam in Spring so that they have time to re-take the tests if they are unhappy with their performance.

This is a good year for your Junior to begin scouting colleges. Start them thinking about where they might want to go and the type of college they might enjoy.

It is an important time for your Senior to complete any college placement exams they have missed or to retake an exam to increase their score.

Encourage them to go to the college nights their school schedules and become clear on what they expect on the college applications.

At all three stages of school, a schedule, and preparation are key. Consistency helps tremendously. After kindergarten, when first grade rolls around, your child will know a week or two before school starts that they will be getting up early. Continue this through their school years; this will form good habits that will serve them throughout their lives. Stay involved in their world. It is much easier to be involved in the elementary years, but there are many opportunities at middle school and high school as well - band and sport boosters; coordinating peer counseling; fundraising. Consider what skills you have and use in your home or your job and offer those skills to the school system. Even if your child does not see you on a day to day basis at the school, they will know you are there, and that is comforting - even if your middle school or high school students won't admit it.

Remind yourself and your child to have fun when they can. They will be meeting new friends and seeing old ones. They will be building relationships that can last a lifetime. Finally, they will be making wonderful memories. Okay, take a deep breath and get started!

## Mental Health Matters

# Building Positive Family Relationships

Building strong family relationships is very important in this day and age. With a world full of broken families, and abused spouses and children, establishing a daily routine with your family will help bring your family closer together. Family routine gives children and parents stability and affirmation on the importance of family while creating a strong bond with one another. Building family relationships by establishing daily routines is one way to make your home a happier one.

### The positive aspects of a daily routine

Using routines at home can reinforce learning, improve communication between family members, and reduce tension. Through a routine there is a sense of wanting to provide a positive atmosphere for the family. Most activities that the world offers are not centered on families. Creating an environment of fun and love will ensure our children are happy and proud to bring their friends home because home will be warm, friendly and a happy place to be.

### Young people want a family of whom they are proud

Studies show that family routines and other family activities are linked to marital satisfaction, children's sense of identity, educational achievement, better health and an overall stronger family relationship. Family routines reinforce the bond between family members and nurture positive feelings. Routines keep the family emotionally close and supportive of each other. A close family has its own regular routine with each member in charge of something. It is important for everyone to follow a daily pattern. These routines make the family stable, emotionally, and there is an overall sense of unity. Having these daily routines makes the family capable of handling life's challenges and it helps with coping with stress.

### What are some daily routines that build family relationships?

#### Have mealtime together

Eating together as a family is a great time to build those family relationships. This is the time for each individual to talk about their day and share it with the other members. It is also a time to tell stories and talk about concerns or any trouble they have been having.



### Give out chores

Giving children specific chores or tasks throughout the day helps them feel important and it gives them a sense of pride knowing they can accomplish such things. It will make them happy to see that you are proud of them.

### Set a bedtime

It is good to have consistency around the house. It has been shown that kids with a set bedtime actually go to bed earlier and sleep better through the night, than those without one. Make bedtime fun; read to them, sing songs, tell stories about your childhood. This will bond you closer together and it will be a time your children look forward to.

### Family traditions

Family traditions may be one of the most important things that bond families together. It could be a simple tradition such as: singing at bedtime, making cookies for a friend or neighbor on Sundays, or setting aside one night a week to share experiences that happened that week and so on. Or you can have more in depth traditions such as: being together on holidays, creating special birthday traditions, participating in 4th of July celebrations with the neighborhood kids or family members. Establishing traditions will help your children feel that they belong to something that is special and important. It gives them something to look forward to every day or every year.

Have fun with your kids during your daily routines. Enjoy your kids, their activities, their talents and embrace being a family. The best family time memories are often those just spent together as a group, sharing jokes and stories, eating together, and having fun. Taking time in building family relationships by establishing daily routines will make your family a closer and happier one. Start your daily routines today; you'll be glad you did!

Source:

[http://www.improvingyourworld.com/relationships/building\\_family\\_relationships\\_by\\_establishing\\_daily\\_routines\\_0\\_02407.html](http://www.improvingyourworld.com/relationships/building_family_relationships_by_establishing_daily_routines_0_02407.html)

## Family Matters

# 10 Tips to Caring for the Caregiver

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- Care giving is a job and respite is your earned right. Reward yourself with respite breaks often.
- Watch out for signs of depression, and don't delay getting professional help when you need it.
- When people offer to help, accept the offer and suggest specific things that they can do.
- Educate yourself about your loved one's condition and how to communicate effectively with doctors.
- There's a difference between caring and doing. Be open to technologies and ideas that promote your loved one's independence.
- Trust your instincts. Most of the time they'll lead you in the right direction.
- Caregivers often do a lot of lifting, pushing, and pulling. Be good to your back.
- Grieve for your losses, and then allow yourself to dream new dreams.
- Seek support from other caregivers. There is great strength in knowing you are not alone.
- Stand up for your rights as a caregiver and a citizen.

Remember, The Holman Group is here to help. When you need the support, pick up the phone and give us a call.

Source: *National Family Caregiver's Association*



For more information about any of the topics discussed in this newsletter or to access your Holman benefits, please call us at (800) 321-2843

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