

Assess yourself

Are Your Efforts to Be Thin Sensible— Or Spinning Out of Control?

On one hand, just because you weigh yourself, count calories, or work out every day, don't jump to the conclusion that you have any of the health concerns discussed in this chapter. On the other hand, efforts to lose a few pounds can spiral out of control. To find out whether your efforts to be thin are harmful to you, take the following quiz from the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA).

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| 1. I constantly calculate numbers of fat grams and calories. | T | F |
| 2. I weigh myself often and find myself obsessed with the number on the scale. | T | F |
| 3. I exercise to burn calories and not for health or enjoyment. | T | F |
| 4. I sometimes feel out of control while eating. | T | F |
| 5. I often go on extreme diets. | T | F |
| 6. I engage in rituals to get me through meal-times and/or secretively binge. | T | F |
| 7. Weight loss, dieting, and controlling my food intake have become my major concerns. | T | F |

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| 8. I feel ashamed, disgusted, or guilty after eating. | T | F |
| 9. I constantly worry about the weight, shape, and/or size of my body. | T | F |
| 10. I feel my identity and value are based on how I look or how much I weigh. | T | F |

If any of these statements is true for you, you could be dealing with disordered eating. If so, talk about it! Tell a friend, parent, teacher, coach, youth group leader, doctor, counselor, or nutritionist what you're going through. Check out the NEDA's Sharing with EEEase handout at www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/nedaDir/files/documents/handouts/ShEEEase.pdf for help planning what to say the first time you talk to someone about your eating and exercise habits.



Source: Reprinted with permission of the National Eating Disorders Association. For more information: www.NationalEatingDisorders.org.

YOUR PLAN FOR CHANGE

The **Assess yourself** activity gave you the chance to evaluate your feelings about your body and to determine whether or not you might be engaging in eating or exercise behaviors that could undermine your health and happiness. Below are some steps you can take to improve your body image, starting today.

Today, you can:

- Talk back to the media. Write letters to advertisers and magazines that depict unhealthy and unrealistic body types. Boycott their products or start a blog commenting on harmful body image messages in the media.
- Visit www.choosemyplate.gov and print out your personalized food plan. Just for today, eat the recommended number of servings from every food

group at every meal, and don't count calories!

Within the next 2 weeks, you can:

- Find a photograph of a person you admire *not* for his or her appearance, but for his or her contribution to humanity. Paste it up next to your mirror to remind yourself that true beauty comes from within and benefits others.

- Start a diary. Each day, record one thing you are grateful for that has nothing to do with your appearance. At the end of each day, record one small thing you did to make someone's world a little brighter.

By the end of the semester, you can:

- Establish a group of friends who support you for who you are, not what you look like, and who get the same support from you. Form a group on a favorite social-networking site, and keep in touch, especially when you start to feel troubled by self-defeating thoughts or have the urge to engage in unhealthy eating or exercise behaviors.
- Borrow from the library or purchase one of the many books on body image now available, and read it!