



Eating Disorders and Gastrointestinal Changes

Gastrointestinal changes are one of the consequences of eating disorders including anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge-eating, and other disordered eating problems. These gastrointestinal problems include:

- Abdominal pain
- Bloating
- Flatulence
- Constipation
- Diarrhoea
- Distressed stomach
- Feeling uncomfortably full

Most of the gastrointestinal abnormalities are caused by inadequate nutrition, which is common to people with eating disorders regardless of whether they restrict or binge/purge. Sufferers often experience a deficiency in **fibre** as a result.

Another common cause of gastrointestinal problems is **laxative abuse**. Normal bowel function becomes agitated, sometimes leading to permanent damage such as incontinence. Other consequences may include loss of intestinal muscle tone, bloating, pain, mucus and blood in faeces, and gas.

Please note that laxatives do NOT assist in eliminating calories or fat – the body will have already absorbed these prior to evacuation. If you are dependent on laxatives or misuse them, it is important to get assistance from your doctor or eating disorder specialist. Do not use laxatives to reduce constipation – your doctor will be able to recommend alternative remedies.

Once you stop using laxatives, it will take a while for your system to recover. Please consider seeking professional medical advice if you have any concerns about your health.