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LONG- TERM CONSEQUENCES OF ANOREXIA NERVOSA

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Anorexia nervosa (AN) is a common finding in adolescent females. It is a psychiatric disorder characterized by abnormal eating behaviours that result in weight loss. The lifetime prevalence of anorexia nervosa is as high as 3.7%. The obsessive fear of gaining weight, critically limited food intake and neuroendocrine aberrations which occur in anorexic patients have crucial short-term and particularly long-term consequences for the general health of these patients. Complications from eating disorders can include amenorrhea, osteoporosis with pathologic fractures, electrolyte disturbances, dehydration, cardiac arrhythmias, and even death. Eating disorders appear not only to increase the risk of miscarriage, but also are associated with preterm delivery and lower infant birth weights. It is reported that 80% of AN patients are affected by a cardiac complications such as sinus bradycardia, a prolonged QT interval on electrocardiography, arrythmias, myocardial mass modification and hypoten- sion. A decrease in bone mineral density (BMD) is one of the most important medical consequences of AN. Reduced BMD may subsequently lead to a three- to seven-fold increased risk of spontaneous fractures. Treatment for eating disorders can be lifesaving and is more effective when instituted before the patient becomes severely underweight. Untreated AN is associated with a significant increase in the risk of death. Better detection and sophisticated therapy should prevent the long-term consequences of this disorder.

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