

Desire to eat 'clean' food can become an obsession

By Sumathi Reddy, Wall Street Journal

The growing interest in eating healthy can at times have unhealthy consequences.

Some doctors and registered dietitians say they are increasingly seeing people whose desire to eat pure or "clean" food—from raw vegans to those who cut out multiple major food sources such as gluten, dairy and sugar—becomes an all-consuming obsession and leads to ill health. In extreme cases, people will end up becoming malnourished.

Some experts refer to the condition as orthorexia nervosa, a little-researched disorder that doesn't have an official diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, or DSM, considered the bible of psychiatric illnesses. Often, individuals with orthorexia will exhibit symptoms of recognized conditions such as obsessive-compulsive disorder or end up losing unhealthy amounts of weight, similar to someone with anorexia.

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