

Abstract Title

Indicators of disordered eating are common among urban Canadian young adults

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Abstract

Introduction: Disordered eating describes clinical and sub-clinical eating disorder symptomatology associated with compromised eating patterns and poor physical and mental health, including risk of developing eating disorders. Little is known about the prevalence of disordered eating among young adults in Canada.

Objectives: This study examined the proportions of young urban Canadian adults, aged 16 to 30 years, who reported indications of disordered eating and who were at risk of developing an eating disorder, and sociodemographic correlates of these conditions.

Methods: Cross-sectional data were drawn from a web-based study comprehensively examining diet and health among young adults (n=2895) recruited from five urban Canadian centres. Indicators of disordered eating were captured by the widely used EAT-3 screening tool. The prevalence of disordered eating indicators was estimated, as was risk of developing an eating disorder based on prior validation research with the EAT-3. General linear regression modeling examined sociodemographic correlates of disordered eating.

Result: Preoccupation with thinness was reported among 23% of women, 22% of men, and 31% of individuals affirming non-binary gender identities. Binge eating with a loss of control was most common among women (30%) whereas vomiting to control weight was highest among those with non-binary gender identities (17%). Approximately one in ten women (12%) and men (10%) were deemed at risk for an eating disorder, with the prevalence among individuals with non-binary gender identities closer to one in five. Weight perceptions were associated with eating disorder risk among women and men, race/ethnicity and body mass index were associated among men, and age was associated among women.

Conclusion: Disordered eating is prevalent among young Canadian adults regardless of gender.

Significance to the Field of Dietetics: Registered dietitians are well positioned to take leadership roles in the prevention, early identification, and treatment of disordered eating to prevent its deleterious implications for health.

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