Eating disorders can lead to other complications later in life

Parents should encourage a healthy and balanced eating pattern in kids

New Delhi, 23 November 2017: As per a recent study, eating disorders could lead to higher body weight, larger waist circumference and lower psychological wellbeing as well as a lower self-evaluation of general health in later life. Disordered eating is detrimental to the physical and mental health of young adults both in the short and long term. As per the IMA, it is imperative for parents must focus on a healthy balanced lifestyle for their children instead of on weight or dieting in order to prevent eating disorders.

Eating disorders are serious and often fatal illnesses that cause severe disturbances to a person’s eating behaviors. Obsessions with food, body weight, and shape may also signal an eating disorder. Common eating disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, "Eating disorders generally appear in the teen years or young adulthood. However, given the increasing peer pressure today, many younger children are also developing these conditions. Eating disorders affect both genders, although the incidence is higher in women than men. Like women who have eating disorders, men also have a distorted sense of body image. For example, men may have muscle dysmorphia, a type of disorder marked by an extreme concern with becoming more muscular. Eating disorders can also be contagious. Most youngsters try to copy the eating fads of one another. Some follow each other and attempt weight loss programmes even if they are not scientifically proven.”

Calorie-counting diets can deprive growing teenagers of the energy they need and lead to symptoms of anorexia nervosa, and other such disorders, which may even become life-threatening.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “It is important that parents help their children develop a healthy body image by encouraging a balanced diet and exercise for fitness, not weight loss. One should also not tease teenagers about their weight. Such comments can also be detrimental to a teenager’s health and lead to the development of eating disorders in them. Dissatisfaction with one’s weight
and body image is associated with lower levels of physical activity and vomiting, and use of laxatives and diuretics to control weight.”

Here are some tips that can prevent the development of eating disorders in young adults.

- **Encourage healthy-eating habit** This includes eating when hungry and a habit of eating together with the family.
- **Encourage questions** Let the children talk about and question what he or she has seen or heard, especially from websites or other sources.
- **Promote a healthy body image** Tell them about how healthy body shapes vary. Avoid making comments about another person based on his or her weight or body shape.
- **Foster self-esteem** Respect and support their accomplishments and goals. Look for positive qualities and assure them that your love and acceptance is unconditional.
- **Educate them** Tell them about the dangers of dieting and emotional eating. Educate them about the fact that eating or controlling diet is not a healthy way to cope with emotions.

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**About IMA:** Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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