

“Invisible” Eating Disorders in Black Women

Eating disorders affect over 20 millions Americans. But in Black women, eating disorders can seem invisible. Research has mostly focused on eating disorders in white women, specifically anorexia. This meant that there wasn't much language to describe what Black women were suffering from.

Rachel Goode, an assistant professor at the UNC School of Social Work, says the lack of visibility is because “people can be in shame and stigma in our communities about eating disorders...because it doesn't seem like our issue.”

Recent research has found that Black women are more likely to suffer from binge-eating and bulimia nervosa, a disorder in which a person binges and then tries methods to avoid gaining weight. Because a diagnosis focuses so much on a person's weight, Black women are overlooked as they are more likely to be classified as overweight or obese.

Goode found that in many cases an eating disorder came before or as a result of a chronic condition, such as Type 2 diabetes.

For those who might have undiagnosed eating disorders, Goode recommends self-diagnosing through a trusted website. She understands that treatment can be expensive and suggests that even having a support group can help with healing.