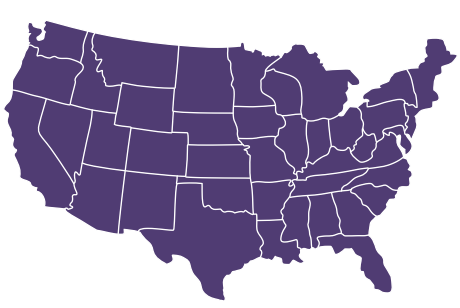


Eating Disorders in Servicemembers, Veterans, and Military Families

Eating disorders are complex medical problems. And the risk for them is high among active duty servicemembers, veterans, and their families. Trauma, stress, weight stigma, and the military's rigorous fitness standards can all contribute to an eating disorder. That is why it is critical to screen every person so they can get the treatment and help they need.¹



28.8 MILLION
Americans affected by eating disorders over the course of their lives.²

Prevalence in the Military

The prevalence of eating disorders in active duty servicemembers and veterans may be higher than studies suggest. Here's why.

Making Weight

Engaging in rigorous physical fitness regimens to fit within the military's strict weight guidelines is commonly referred to as making weight. The practice of making weight has been linked to eating disorders.³

Conditions associated with eating disorders in active duty servicemembers and veterans⁴

- Major depression
- PTSD
- Sexual Trauma



Veterans who experience military sexual trauma are at risk for eating disorders. This is true for veterans of all genders.⁵

Risks for Servicemembers and their Families

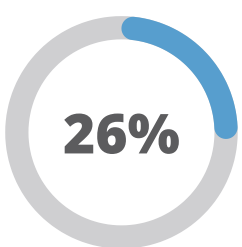
26% increase in eating disorder diagnoses among military personnel from 2013 to 2016⁶

Percent of female veterans who are affected by eating disorders⁷

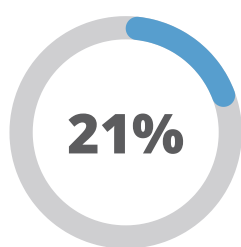
16%



Military families experience eating disorders at three times the rates of their civilian peers.⁸



Spouses of servicemembers



Children of servicemembers

Male veterans with a history of military sexual trauma are **2x as likely** to have an eating disorder compared to female veterans.⁴

Veterans experience bulimia nervosa at **3x the rate** of civilians.⁹

Servicemembers are more likely to experience eating disorders because of:¹

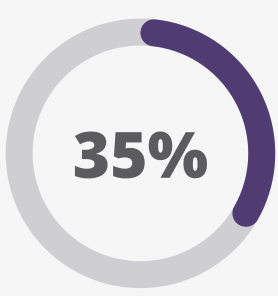
- Body Shape
- Fitness Standards
- Military environment
- PTSD
- Military sexual trauma
- Sexual harassment
- Weight stigma



Male veterans who identify as a sexual minority report more eating disorder thoughts and behaviors than male veterans who identify as straight.¹⁰

Treatment Gaps

Easy access to eating disorder treatment in the U.S. military health system is lacking.¹¹



Only 35% of eating disorder treatment centers across the country accept TriCare¹²



TriCare currently doesn't cover expenses for dietitian services related to an eating disorder diagnosis.¹¹



Adding eating disorder screening to current military screening requirements will identify more cases and allow for quicker treatment.¹³

SERVE Act (Supporting Eating Disorders Recovery Through Vital Expansion)

The bipartisan SERVE Act passed in FY2022 as part of the National Defense Authorization Act. This bill allows military families to receive residential eating disorder treatment up to age 65 instead of capping those treatments at age 20. It also requires the Department of Defense (DoD) to identify, treat, and care for servicemembers who are affected by eating disorders. The DoD must also create criteria and guidelines to identify and treat eating disorders.

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