



3rd most common chronic illness

≠ disorders

Crista-Lee was like every other girl in her class. She was worried about her appearance and even more concerned about being overweight. Her mother was constantly nagging at her about her weight loss. Crista-Lee had been losing, not gaining weight since turning 16. Her mother was very worried.

Eating disorders occur in all socioeconomic and ethnic groups. Eating problems usually develop in girls between age 12 and 25. Age 17 is the average age that an eating disorder develops and between 5% and 10% of young people have eating disorders. Eating disorders also occur in older women and in men, but much less frequently. Although they revolve around eating and body weight, eating disorders aren't about food, but about feelings and self-expression. Women with eating disorders use food and dieting as ways of coping with life's stresses.

Eating disorders, such as bulimia and anorexia nervosa, have potentially serious health consequences that can

contribute to, or cause, death. Oral health providers play a fundamental role in the early detection, client-specific oral treatment, and referral for care of eating disorders, because they are often the first health professionals to observe overt health effects. Ontario dental hygienists are practising this important critical responsibility to help in early detection of such disorders. When Crista-Lee was at her annual oral check-up, it was her dental hygienist who noticed signs of malnutrition, dehydration and vomiting. Crista-Lee had a sore, red tongue (pica) and some loss of tooth enamel from regurgitation. It takes skills in client communication regarding this sensitive topic to be able to raise the issues with a young client. Crista-Lee responded positively to the questions and the discussion about what the disorder was doing to her oral health too.

With Crista-Lee's permission, the dental hygienist was permitted to call her mother in and share in the discussion.

Crista-Lee's mouth tells a new story now.