

Viewpoint: Can you inherit anorexia and other eating disorders?

Experts have long known that eating disorders stem from a combination of [hereditary and environmental factors](#), but no one had ever delved deep enough to pinpoint the specific genes at play until [Cynthia] Bulik and her team stepped up to the plate. [The Anorexia Nervosa Genetics Initiative's] findings have been illuminating for researchers and patients, revealing that the origins of anorexia include a combination of metabolic and psychiatric components. More specifically, ANGI identified eight genetic variants significantly associated with anorexia nervosa; and the research shows that the origins of this serious disorder appear to be both physical and psychological.

Earlier research [from Bulik and colleagues](#) found that a first-degree relative of someone with a disorder is up to [12 times more likely](#) to develop one than a relative of someone ED-free.

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According to the paper Bulik and her colleagues [published in Nature Genetics](#) in July 2019, ANGI revealed for the first time that there's a genetic basis of anorexia that overlaps with metabolic traits, including how the body processes sugar and fats, as well as anthropometric (body measurement) characteristics that are not due to the genetic effects that influence body mass index (BMI). The upshot: It doesn't matter what size, shape, or weight you are — anyone with these metabolic traits could be vulnerable to developing anorexia.

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