

# Low oxytocin tied to impaired social-emotional function

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(HealthDay)—Low oxytocin levels are related to a lack of emotional

awareness in women with a history of anorexia nervosa (AN), according to a study published recently in the *International Journal of Eating Disorders*.

Cindy Schmelkin, M.D., from Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, and colleagues assessed fasting serum oxytocin levels in 79 women (19 who were less than 85 percent of ideal body weight [IBW] with AN, 26 who were 90 to 120 percent IBW with a history of AN, and 34 who were 90 to 120 percent IBW with no eating disorder history).

The researchers found that most measures of social-emotional functioning showed impairment in women with AN or a history of AN, versus those with no eating disorder history. In those with a history of AN, oxytocin levels were low, compared to women with no history. Low oxytocin levels were associated with difficulty identifying feelings ( $P = 0.008$ ) and overall alexithymia ( $P = 0.0489$ ) across groups.

"We speculate that low [oxytocin levels](#) may contribute to alexithymia in [women](#) with anorexia nervosa," the authors write.

**More information:** [Abstract](#)  
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