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*'My name's Solmaz and I'm a DRUNKOREXIC'*

IT'S THE DANGEROUS NEW EATING DISORDER OF THE BINGE-DRINKING GENERATION. MORE AND MORE YOUNG WOMEN ARE CUTTING BACK ON FOOD SO THEY CAN USE THE CALORIES ON ALCOHOL INSTEAD

By Eimear O'Hagan

"Over the past five months, I've more or less stopped eating altogether," says Solmaz Shiyar, a nursing assistant, from Manchester, who goes out at least three or four nights a week.

"Most of my calories come from alcohol," the 22-year-old says.

"I try not to consume more than 500 calories a day, which is 1,500 less than the recommended amount."

Solmaz is an extreme example of a growing band of weight-conscious young women who are risking their health by skipping meals before a night of heavy drinking to avoid putting on weight.

This shocking new trend, dubbed "drunkorexia", is gaining frightening ground among women who are desperate to stay thin without compromising their alcohol-fuelled social lives.



Unwilling to give up her nights out, Solmaz, who is 5ft 5in, has decided to save calories for alcohol instead of food, and half a year into her drunkorexia regime, she has shrunk to a size 4 (US size zero) and lost 3st, going from 9st 7lb to 6st 7lb (pictured left as a size 10).

Her appetite has all but disappeared, and she confesses that she now finds it almost impossible to eat.

"When I go to restaurants with friends I order something small and push it round my plate.

"When we order a pizza, I just have one slice," she says.

Solmaz is clearly in the grip of an eating disorder and is undeniably damaging her health but, incredibly, she insists that her "diet" has given her back her confidence.

"I've never felt as energetic or happy in all my life," she insists.

"How can I be suffering from an eating disorder when I feel so good?"

Clinical dietician and eating disorders expert Hala El-Shafie, from The Harley Nutrition Clinic, says: "In the era of size zero, where we regularly see photos of very thin celebrities falling out of nightclubs, it's seen as virtuous to turn down food, but socially acceptable to drink to excess.

"But what these girls may fail to realise is all the problems associated with both alcoholism and eating disorders.

"Cirrhosis of the liver, memory loss and infertility are all potential consequences of drunkorexia."

Another young woman flirting with the dangers of drunkorexia is Chanelle Skelly, 24, who often enjoys wild nights, downing a lethal combination of wine, alcopops, amaretto and sambuca – and all on an empty stomach.

"On Saturdays and Sundays I'll have a very light lunch but I won't have any dinner because I know I'll be going out drinking with the girls and I want to save on the calories," says Chanelle, a hotel hostess from Liverpool.

To make up for the excesses of her weekend, Chanelle, who's 5ft 8in and weighs 10st 7lb, also limits her calorie intake during the week and exercises zealously.

Chanelle, who is a size 10, admits she feels under pressure to be slim.

"I realised that if I didn't want to give up alcopops, I'd have to sacrifice calories elsewhere."



Hannah Houston (left), 23, a PR consultant from London, follows a similar philosophy.

She diets Monday to Friday, with salads for lunch and no carbs in the evenings, and does netball training and running three times a week – then jumps on the binge-drinking bandwagon at the weekend.

A size 14, Hannah is 5ft 10in and weighs 11st 7lb.

She says: "My dedication to healthy eating and exercise is a trade off for my socialising and drinking.

"It's a bargain I've struck with my body.

"Girls of my generation often joke, 'eating's cheating' but there is an element of truth to it."

Emma Healey, from the eating disorders charity BEAT, warns against drunkorexia as a way to lose weight.

She says: "Women following this sort of behaviour run the risk of becoming trapped in a destructive cycle of weight loss which can be physically and emotionally damaging.

"If someone is controlling their food intake to the extent that it is controlling their life, that is an eating disorder and not a lifestyle choice."

And Dr Hilary warns that this way of eating could kill: "These women have serious eating disorders and an obsession with binge drinking.

"Either could kill them.

"Their brains, hearts, livers and stomachs are all damaged by alcohol and a lack of vitamins.

"They are preoccupied with rigid dieting and use booze to escape.

"I wouldn't be surprised if two of them were dead within five years if they continue like this."

*Would you consider yourself to be a drunkorexic? Is it really a big deal? Or does this new trend scare you? Do you think about the longer-term health implications behind binge drinking and not eating properly? Do you think it is something girls grow out of?*

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Photography: Nigel Hillier, David Woolfall; Hair and Make-Up: Ava Maurer, Caroline Piasecki at Time shot on location at Cafe Care, Harrow-on-the-Hill (020 8864 8456), The H Bar, Liverpool (0151 227 4481), The Living Room, Manchester (0161 832 0083); We travelled courtesy of Virgin Trains (www.virgintrains.com)



Solmaz is six months into her 'drunkorexia' regime

**'I realised that if I didn't want to give up alcopops, I'd have to sacrifice calories elsewhere'**



Party girl Chanelle 'ignores' midweek hunger pangs

**SHOTS OR SOLIDS?**  
How drunkorexics calculate their swaps their swaps

- One portion of sausage and mash (585 calories) = 7 glasses of red wine (80 calories each)
- Sweet and sour chicken and fried rice (1,105 calories) = 4 WKD Blue (228 calories each)
- Beef lasagne (665 calories) = 4 pints of lager (166 calories each)
- 2 slices of toast with low-fat spread and jam (200 calories) = 1 shot of sambuca (172 calories)
- 20 prawns (59 calories) = 1 gin and slimline tonic (56 calories)

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