

Eating disorders

We all have different eating habits and there is a range of eating styles that allow us to stay healthy and fit our lifestyle.

It is common for people to change their eating habits when affected by stress or pressure but go back to normal when the difficulty has passed.

Eating disorders occur when eating behaviours allow for extreme reduction of food intake or overeating over a period of time. It is not just about food and eating – it is about difficult problem and painful feelings. Focusing on food is a way of disguising these problems.

Main types of eating disorder:-

Eating disorder	What it is	Signs and symptoms
Anorexia nervosa	eating represents everything bad and not eating and losing weight means control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visible self starvation• Obsession with weight, appearance, calories and exercise• Unusual food habits e.g. cutting food small, hiding, not swallowing
Bulimia nervosa	feeling compelled to eat large amounts of food and then undo the effect through purging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eat vast amounts of food• Make self vomit and /or use laxatives to get rid of calories(purging)• Eating in secret or going to toilet straight after meals
Binge eating disorder	the same as bulimia but without the purging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fear of not controlling or being able to stop eating• Vague or secretive eating patterns• Associating social and work difficulties with weight
Compulsive overeating	An addiction to food using it as a coping strategy.	As for binge eating disorder

Causes of eating disorders

There is no single factor that leads to someone developing an eating disorder. Causes can come from situations within personality, past experience and current events or pressure. These can include:-

- Obsessive or compulsive behaviour
- Stressful event or trauma
- Value as an individual depends on weight and body shape

Professional help

Treatment for eating disorders will not only establish regular and healthy eating but also deal with emotional issues. These can include referral to a specialist counsellor, psychiatrist or psychologist, talking therapies or medication. A severely low body weight may require hospital admission. The first source of support would be your GP who can check that symptoms are not due to underlying illness and refer on to appropriate support.

Self help/helping others

There are organisations that offer confidential helplines, information and group support for both those experiencing eating disorders and those around them – friends, family and work colleagues. A list of these is at the end of the sheet. Some people find it beneficial talking to others with the same problem, whether that is face to face, by telephone or online.

If you are helping someone with an eating problem, do not judge them or make assumptions. Give them the opportunity to talk about their feelings and if they don't want to talk about it they may be ok to read information. Encouragement to seek professional help such as seeing GP or counselling is supportive.

Support organisations

Beat - Provides helplines, online support and a network of UKwide self help groups to help adults and young people beat their eating disorder.

www.b-eat.co.uk

Helpline 0845 634 1414

Youth helpline 0845 634 7650

Anorexia and Bulimia care (ABC) - provides personal advice and support to anyone affected by anorexia, bulimia, binge eating and all kinds of eating distress.

www.anorexiabulimiacare.org.uk

Telephone: 03000 11 12 13

National centre for eating disorders – for carers and free information

www.eating-disorders.org.uk

Telephone: 0845 838 2040

Men get eating disorders too – provides information and support that is specific to the needs of men. Online peer support and information leaflets.

www.mengetedstoo.co.uk

Young minds – information for parents and young people

www.youngminds.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 802 5544