



A guide to eating disorders in young people

Eating disorders are serious conditions that affect over 725,000 people in the UK. They most commonly affect teenage girls. However, up to 10% of young people with eating disorders are boys. Eating disorders are also associated with mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.



The main types of eating disorders that affect young people are:

Anorexia

Causes an obsession with being thin, an irrational fear of gaining weight, and a distorted body image. People with anorexia try to keep their weight as low as possible, by starving themselves and purging their body of calories.

Bulimia

Causes people to binge (eat lots of food at once) and then make themselves sick, abuse laxatives or exercise excessively (purging). Bulimia can be harder to spot than anorexia because often, someone with bulimia stays a 'normal' weight.

Binge eating disorder (BED)

Causes people to binge eat on a regular basis, even when they aren't hungry. People with BED don't purge, which means they can become obese.

Other specified feeding or eating disorders (OSFED)

OSFED, also known as eating disorders not otherwise specified (EDNOS), can resemble other forms of eating disorder but the set of symptoms don't fall into any of the above categories, to receive a formal diagnosis.



What parents can do if they suspect their child has an eating disorder

Parents can follow these recommended guidelines to help children who may be struggling:

- + **Start talking** - encouraging children to discuss any worries and insecurities will be useful in understanding the reasons that may have led them to feel badly about themselves
- + **Help with healthy eating habits** - encourage a healthy attitude towards eating. Schools can also be useful partners in helping young people manage their eating
- + **Keep calm** - try to communicate without being judgemental or argumentative. Think carefully about what to say beforehand, speak calmly and be careful not to criticise
- + **Explore treatment options** - discuss any concerns with the child's GP as soon as possible, so that they can advise on available treatment and make any necessary referrals
- + **Avoid talking about appearance** - think carefully about how to discuss things, as comments can be misunderstood. Acknowledge when children are managing food in a positive way
- + **Don't give up** - during undoubtedly difficult times, things may feel hopeless - but with time and appropriate help, it is perfectly possible for young people to make a lasting recovery



Contact us

Priory works with leading mental health professionals and our proven record of helping people to get their lives back on track is unrivalled.

For more information, please contact us by:

Telephone: 0800 840 3219

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Read more about eating disorder treatment at Priory by scanning the QR code.

For the most up to date information on our services, please visit our website.

