

Eating Disorder

Toolbox Talk MH09



Eating disorders

Tend to develop during the teenage and young adult years, and they are much more common in girls and women. No one knows the precise cause of eating disorders, but they seem to coexist with psychological and medical issues such as low self esteem, depression, anxiety, trouble coping with emotions, and substance abuse.

For some people, a preoccupation with food becomes a way to gain control over one aspect of their lives. Although it may start out as simply eating a bit more or less than usual, the behaviour can spiral out of control and take over the person's life. Eating disorders are a serious medical problem that can have long term health consequences if left untreated.

It's common for people with eating disorders to hide their unhealthy behaviours, so it can be difficult to recognize the signs of an eating disorder, especially early on.

Here's a more detailed look at the symptoms of anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder.

Anorexia nervosa

This is characterized by weight loss often due to excessive dieting and exercise, sometimes to the point of starvation. People with anorexia feel they can never be thin enough and continue to see themselves as despite extreme weight loss.

Bulimia nervosa

The condition is marked by cycles of extreme overeating, known as bingeing, followed by purging or other behaviours to compensate for the overeating. It is also associated with feelings of loss of control about eating.

Binge eating disorder

This is characterized by regular episodes of extreme overeating and feelings of loss of control about eating.

Avoidant / restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID)

This condition is characterized by eating very little and/or avoiding certain foods. It usually begins in childhood, people with ARFID may avoid certain foods because of their texture or odour.

Eating disorders. Know the first signs?



Lips

Are they obsessive about food?



Flips

Is their behaviour changing?



Hips

Do they have distorted beliefs about their body size?



Kips

Are they often tired or struggling to concentrate?



Nips

Do they disappear to the toilet after meals?



Skips

Have they started exercising excessively?

If you're worried someone you care about is showing any signs of an eating disorder – even if they're not on our list – act quickly and get in touch. We can give you the answers and support you need to help them on the road to recovery as soon as possible.

Don't delay. Visit beateatingdisorders.org.uk/tips



