



# **Eating Disorders Awareness Week**

**1<sup>st</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021**



# What is an eating problem?

An eating problem is any relationship with food that people may find difficult. Many people think that someone with an eating problem will be over or underweight. People might also think that certain weights are linked to certain eating problems. Neither of these things are true.

## **What's the difference between an eating problem and an eating disorder?**

An eating disorder is a medical diagnosis. This diagnosis is based on your eating patterns and includes medical tests on your weight, blood and body mass index. An eating problem is any relationship with food that you find difficult. This can be just as hard to live with as a diagnosed eating disorder. In both cases they can be used and seen as a coping mechanism for someone to feel in control when they feel they have a lack of it in other parts of their lives.

# Types of eating disorders

Eating disorders include a range of conditions that can affect someone physically, psychologically, and socially.

The most common eating disorders are:

## **Anorexia Nervosa**

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When a person tries to keep their weight as low as possible.

## **Bulimia Nervosa**

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When a person has periods of binge eating and then is deliberately sick or uses laxatives.

## **Orthorexia Nervosa**

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An eating disorder that involves an obsession with healthy eating.

## **Binge Eating Disorder**

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Overeating large amounts of food in a short space of time.

Other eating disorders conditions include Rumination disorder, Pica and ARFID (Avoidant/restrictive food disorder) - these tend to be less common but can be as serious as the disorders listed above.

# What causes eating problems or disorders?

There is no single cause of eating problems. Most health professionals think they're caused by a combination of factors that may be bullying, environmental changes, relationship issues or media. Some factors may be biological, while others come from current surroundings or issues from past. It might be hard to understand why eating has become an issue for the person or people around them. The reasons can be complex and confusing. Indications that may suggest an eating problem or disorder include:

**Regularly skipping meals**

**Large amounts of food going missing**

**Counting calories obsessively**

**Avoiding events where food is involved**

**Eating only low-calorie food**

**Drinking excessive amounts of water**

**Wearing very loose clothes**

**Issues with substance misuse or alcohol**

**An obsession with exercise**

**Excessive smoking to combat hunger**

**Dramatic weight loss or gain**

**Out of character risk taking behaviours**

# Recovery – Self Care

Recovery will look and feel differently for everyone. Some things you can control are below. Please see additional information on websites at the end of this document for extra support and information.



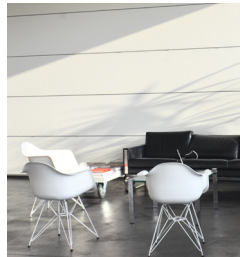
## Talk to people you trust

Eating problems can feel very difficult to talk about for many reasons. People close to you may find eating problems hard to understand but will often want to help however they can.



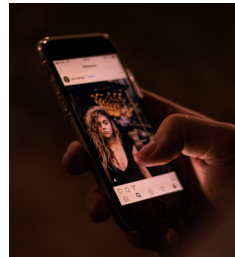
## Change unhealthy routines

Routines around eating and food can be hard to break. But you might find that making small changes can help. Try to think of some positive goals that are not related to food or calories.



## Seek peer support

Eating problems can make you feel isolated and misunderstood. It can help to talk to people who are going through something similar. You can find peer support online or face-to-face.



## Be careful online

We are often surrounded by pictures and images – especially on social media, and you may find that you spend a lot of time comparing your body to other people's. Adjust who you follow if you need to.



## Learn how to manage relapses

It's very common to go back to old thoughts and behaviours, especially around times when you feel stressed. Remember that it is possible to feel better, even if it takes a long time.



## Difficult times of year

Celebrations that revolve around food and eating, like Christmas and birthdays, might trigger difficult thoughts and behaviours. Talk to someone you trust about how you feel and what might make things easier.

# Recovery – Supporting Others

If you're worried about someone then it's important to encourage them to seek treatment, but you can also play a vital role in helping them get better by being a listening ear.



## Let them know you are there

Make sure the person knows you're here to listen and can help them find support. Let them know they can talk to you when they're ready.



## Try not to get frustrated

They might already feel guilty about how their behaviour is affecting you. Try to be as understanding and patient as you can.



## Don't make assumptions

Try not to interpret what their eating problem means without listening, as this may make them feel less able to share their emotions and seek support.



# Where can I get help?

Talk to your doctor who will be able to refer you to a specialist in eating disorders. Further information is also available through the links below. If you are struggling or are concerned you may have a problem and would like to speak to a counsellor, you can also contact your Employee Assistance Programme if your organisation provides this.



**Beating Eating Disorders**

[www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk)



**Mind**

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)



**NHS - Eating Disorders**

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)