

# Welfare Awareness Topic: Eating Problems and Disorders

**Overview** – *An Eating Problem is any relationship with food that you find difficult, and an eating disorder is a diagnosis based on your eating patterns. If you have an eating problem, there are different ways that it can affect how you feel or behave. Anyone can experience eating problems, regardless of age, gender, weight or background.*

Eating problems are not always about food, but they can be about feelings and difficult things. The control of foods might be used as a way of coping with feelings and other situations. This can involve eating too much or too little, worrying about one's weight and body shape.

**How do I know if it is a problem?** If you have an eating problem, you might do the following things:

- Restrict the amount of food you eat, eating more than needed, or feeling out of control when eating
- Eat in secret or not liking to eat in public
- Feel anxious about eating or digesting food, or eat in response to difficult emotions without feeling hungry.
- Feel anxious and upset when eating, or disgusted or scared at certain foods
- Do thing to get rid of what has been eaten, sometimes known as purging
- Eat things that aren't really food, such as dirt, soap or paint
- Think about food and eating a lot, even all the time
- Compare your body with other people's and thinking a lot about its shape or size, like weighing yourself often.

**If your relationship with food and eating is affecting your daily life, regardless of how much you weigh or what your body looks like, reach out and seek help.**

Eating problems can affect people in lots of ways, such as making you feel depressed and anxious, tired a lot of the time, ashamed and guilty, or scared of other people finding out. Talking about your eating problems can feel scary, to access treatment, the first step is to talk to your GP or doctor. They can refer you to specialist services and get you the right support.

**If you are worried about someone you know, there are some behaviours to look out for that might indicate they are struggling with their mental health / an eating problem or disorder:**

Lying about how much they have eaten, what they have eaten or their weight; eating a lot of food very fast, or eating very little food; going to the bathroom a lot after eating; exercising a lot; avoiding eating with others; cutting food into small pieces, eating very slowly or having very strict eating habits or routines; wearing loose or baggy clothes to hide their weight loss; changes in mood such as being withdrawn, anxious or depressed.

## Article/Source

- [BEAT](#) have resources and information on eating disorders, and runs a supportive online community. They have an adult helpline on [0808 801 0677](tel:0808 801 0677) and a Studentline on [0808 801 0811](tel:0808 801 0811). They also have a [directory of support services](#).
- Mind have information on eating problems, as well as where to get support, and how to help a family or friend who you think might be struggling with an eating problem, have a look at their [support resources](#) and their [guide on eating problems and disorders](#). **This outlines ways to talk or help people who might be struggling as well.**
- [ABC Anorexia and Bulimia Care](#) provide personal care and support for anyone affected by anorexia, bulimia, binge eating & all types of eating distress. They have [peer-led support groups](#), you can book [a 1:1 support call](#), and they have a helpline on **03000 11 12 13** open Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 9am - 1pm. You can also email [support@anorexiabulimiare.org.uk](mailto:support@anorexiabulimiare.org.uk) or [familyandfriends@anorexiabulimiare.org.uk](mailto:familyandfriends@anorexiabulimiare.org.uk)
- The NHS have a [service search](#) to find help and support if you have an eating disorder, and more information about eating disorders [here](#).

## Support:

If you would like to talk to the safeguarding team about anything you have just read, we will listen without judgement and signpost you to support. If you would like to talk to a member of the Safeguarding Team then please get in touch: [safeguarding@bpp.com](mailto:safeguarding@bpp.com) - No question is a silly one!