

“ Anorexia makes you see things differently and although you might not want to take the advice it will really help and you will be grateful in the future, trust me. I am much happier now than I was when I had anorexia and have much more time for things I care about, rather than worry about food. ”

“ People need to start understanding more about anorexia and mental health problems. Just because someone doesn't look physically unwell, doesn't always mean they are okay. ”

“ I have also had friends with eating disorders. It can be hard to watch your friends suffer with an eating disorder and not knowing what to do, but there are lots of ways that you can help. Although you might not feel like they want your advice, it will really help them. ”

## Useful contacts

### Beat

The UK's eating disorder charity.

Youthline: **0808 801 0711**

Helpline: **0808 801 0677**  
(Every day, 3pm-10pm)

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

### SEED

Eating disorder support service.

Helpline: **01482 718130**  
(Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2.30pm)

Website: [www.seedeatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.seedeatingdisorders.org.uk)

### Eating Disorders Support

Provide support to anyone affected by eating disorders, including carers.

Helpline: **01494 793223**  
(24 hours, 7 days a week)

Website: [www.eatingdisorderssupport.co.uk](http://www.eatingdisorderssupport.co.uk)

### stem4

The Old Town Hall  
4 Queens Road  
Wimbledon  
London SW19 8YA

e: [info@stem4.org.uk](mailto:info@stem4.org.uk)  
[stem4.org.uk](http://stem4.org.uk)

Registered Charity Number 1144506



## Eating Disorders



**stem4**  
stemming teenage mental illness  
supporting teenage mental health

# Eating Disorders

## Key Facts:

Eating disorders are characterised by an abnormal attitude to food and body weight/shape, leading a person to alter their eating patterns and behaviours, causing damage to their physical and mental health.

There are three main types of eating disorders:

- **Anorexia nervosa** – a person who perceives their body abnormally and as a result tries to keep their weight as low as possible
- **Bulimia nervosa** – a person who goes through periods of binge eating followed by trying to get rid of what they have eaten
- **Binge eating disorder** – a person who compulsively eats large quantities of food

All eating disorders harm physical and mental health and are very dangerous mental illness conditions. Early and effective treatment is essential.

## How do I know if I have an eating disorder?

- Has the **quantity** or **type of food** you eat changed significantly?
- Have you noticed **changes** and/or **fluctuations in your body weight**?
- Do you have a much **lower/higher body weight** than you normally do?

- Do you **feel bad after you have eaten** and wish you hadn't?
- Do you do things to **get rid of food** that you have eaten?
- Do you have a **distorted perception** of your body so that what you think is out of sync with what others think?
- Are you **uncomfortable eating around others**?
- Have your **eating habits altered** in response to an upsetting or unsettling situation or incident?

If most of your answers are 'yes' please do see a GP or mental health practitioner who can make a correct diagnosis.

## Why deal with an eating disorder?

- Eating disorders have a very negative effect on your physical health, in time affecting all parts of your body
- Eating disorders affect your mental health very negatively
- Eating disorders can make you isolated and ultimately lonely
- They make it hard to eat with others, so that socialising becomes problematic
- Eating disorders make it hard for you to achieve your true potential
- Eating disorders affect the workings of your brain in a negative way including reduced mood and concentration
- Eating disorders end up making you feel miserable

## What can I try to do?

- Take on board other people's concerns and accept that there is a problem
- Encourage yourself to eat regularly however hard it may be. Take small and consistent steps to get better
- Make a decision to reduce harmful behaviours associated with binge-eating, one step at a time
- Talk to a trusted adult
- Visit your GP by phoning your local practice and booking an appointment (check if you can book it with their mental health lead). Go ready to discuss your concerns and the problems you are experiencing. Make sure you mention any physical symptoms you have noticed. Write down things that are hard to say. If you have a lot to discuss, book a double appointment
- Ask your GP to check your health – for example, your blood pressure or your blood iron levels
- Keep a diary to note triggers, negative thoughts and eating patterns
- Get help as early as possible. You can ask your GP what treatment is available and what it entails
- Read any self-help material that your GP gives you or check recommendations on NHS Choices
- Be open-minded and be prepared to change

