

Talk to people you trust:

While people around you may find eating problems difficult to understand, they will usually want to help you however they can. You may find it useful, when you feel able, to discuss with them things that they can do to help, and things that they should try to avoid doing.

What treatment and support is available?

The help and support of friends, family and professionals – such as a Counsellor - can help you identify and resolve the underlying causes of your eating problems. Without this, breaking free from a negative relationship with food can be extremely difficult. Receiving help early on, from people who are experienced in treating eating problems, is very important.

What are the benefits of counselling?

Nearly everyone faces challenges and difficulties in their life at some time. But sometimes they are overwhelming and we feel like we are helpless. The experience of exploring your thoughts and feelings with another individual can relieve your sense that you are entirely alone with your problems. Greater self-knowledge and understanding can enhance your relationship with yourself and others and improve your sense of choice and self-esteem. This in turn can cultivate the feeling that life can be enjoyed rather than endured.

Help and Support can be accessed from:

A Medical Professional: your GP, Talking Therapies, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy,

Contact information:	
Anorexia and Bulimia Care (ABC)	03000 11 12 13
www.b-eat.co.uk	0845 634 7650
Youthline (Coopers Hill, Bracknell)	01344 311200
Youngminds.org.uk	
Mind.org.uk	0844 448 4448

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UNDERSTANDING EATING DISORDERS INFORMATION SHEET



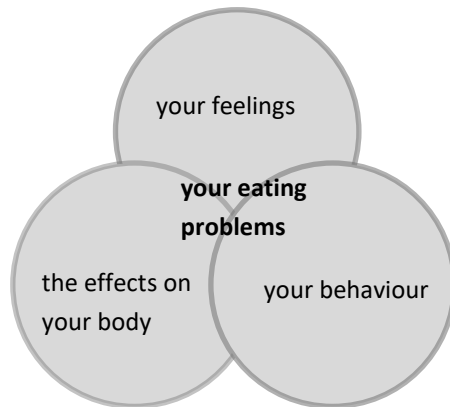
Young People's Counselling Service

UNDERSTANDING EATING DISORDERS—INFORMATION SHEET

Food plays an important part in our lives and most of us will spend time thinking about what we eat. Our relationship with food often changes: sometimes we may try to eat more healthily, have cravings, eat too much or lose our appetite. We may find it hard to eat if we're feeling stressed, or eat comfort food if we feel unhappy. Changing your eating habits every now and again like this is normal, and doesn't need to worry you.

However, if you aren't eating a regular balanced diet over a longer period of time, it could start to be a problem for you. Having an eating problem can be very hard to cope with but it's important to understand that eating problems aren't just about food. They can be about difficult things in your life and painful feelings, which you may be finding hard to express, face or resolve. Focusing on food can be a way of disguising these problems, even from yourself.

Because eating problems can noticeably affect your body, you may feel that people around you focus mainly on your actions, or on the physical impact they have. But you may feel that your problem is more complicated than the people around you realise. This diagram might help you to visualise the complexity of an eating problem:



What types of eating disorders are there?

- Bulimia nervosa
- Anorexia nervosa
- Binge eating disorder
- Eating disorder not otherwise specified (EDNOS)

Bulimia nervosa:

One of the most common eating problems. If you experience bulimia, you may find that you eat large amounts of food all in one go, often because you are feeling upset or worried. This is called bingeing. You may then feel guilty or ashamed after bingeing, and want to get rid of the food you have eaten. This is called purging.

Anorexia nervosa:

Anorexia means you don't allow yourself to eat enough food to get the energy and nutrition you need to stay physically healthy. Sometimes people assume that anorexia is about slimming and dieting, but it is often connected to very low self-esteem, negative self-image and feelings of intense distress.

Binge eating disorder:

Binge eating disorder means you might feel like you can't stop yourself from eating, even if you want to. This is sometimes described as having a food addiction or compulsive eating. If you experience binge eating disorder, you may come to rely on food for emotional support, or be using food to mask difficult feelings.

Eating disorder not otherwise specified (EDNOS):

Eating disorder not otherwise specified (EDNOS) is a diagnosis that is becoming more common. If your doctor diagnoses you with EDNOS, it means you meet some but not all of the criteria for an eating disorder like bulimia or anorexia. For example, you may be starving yourself but be close to what is considered a healthy weight for your age and height. Or you may binge and purge every month but not regularly enough for a diagnosis of bulimia.

What causes eating problems?

There is no single cause of eating problems, and sometimes it can be hard to understand why it has become an issue. The reasons for an eating problem may be very complex and confusing. The sufferer may have had certain experiences or have personality traits that may help them to understand where their eating problem came from, but this is often very personal.

How can I help myself?

Eating problems can be overcome. Many people find that, once they have found support and help, they begin to learn how to tackle their problems, cope with the causes and improve their relationship with food.