

How to support a child with

# EATING DIFFICULTIES

## Useful Apps:

Unless stated otherwise, apps are not supplied by the NHS and the NHS is not liable for their use.



SAM



FearTools



What's Up?



Fabulous - Daily  
Routine Planner



Stop, Breathe and  
Think Kids



## WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

Eating difficulties can present differently in each child. Some indications the child has developed a difficult relationship with food include;

- Consistently trying to lose or control weight by dieting and restricting food.
- Excessive exercising.
- Eating excessive amounts of food followed by binging / gaining weight.
- Experiencing distress after eating.
- Negative body image.
- Argumentative, especially around mealtimes.
- Controlling and rigid around food and mealtimes.
- Dieting or restricting food.

Mental health and wellbeing cards

<https://hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk>

## WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

- Preoccupied by food e.g. counting calories.
- Physical symptoms e.g. weight loss, tired, lethargic, difficulty concentrating, feeling cold and in girls lack of periods.
- Impact on other areas of life e.g. school, friendships and day to day leisure activities.
- Type 1 diabetics may be inconsistent with their insulin and diabetes management, this should be checked with a medical team as a matter of priority.

## NEURODIVERGENT

Neurodivergent young people may appear to experience differences with food.

This can be for many reasons including sensory preferences:

- Consistency and texture of foods.
- Smells of cooking and food.
- Desire or dislike of strong flavours.
- Preferences for brand specific foods.
- Repeated meals

Neurodivergent children may prefer to eat repeated foods and have predictable meal times.

You may need to seek support if this is affecting their weight and general wellbeing.

## WHEN SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

**The impact the eating disorder has on the young person can vary, they may experience;**

- Distress, especially around food and mealtimes.
- Have an impact on the young person's ability to cope with everyday life such as going to or attending leisure activities.
- More arguments or disagreements in the family around food / mealtimes, exercise levels or suspected vomiting.
- Other people commenting or noticing there is a difficulty or a change in weight.
- Difficulties with food lasting longer than a couple of weeks.

## EMERGENCY SYMPTOMS

**Seek immediate medical advice:**

- **Sudden or rapid weight loss.**
- **Fainting or collapsing.**
- **Drowsiness.**
- **Refusing food or drink for more than 24 hours.**
- **Chest pain.**
- **Daily vomiting.**

## WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT MY CHILD?

- Recognise they and you are not to blame, show patience - they may take time to open up about it, find safe ways to talk about it.
- Avoid social situations involving food, play a game, go for a walk or watch a movie - remove stress.
- Remove stress and pressure from mealtimes, allow them to eat what they feel comfortable with.
- Help them find good sources of information on it.
- If the young person is exercising encourage them to educate themselves on how to properly fuel their body.
- Promote a balanced diet with all food groups (carbohydrates, protein, fats, vegetables and fruit, dairy/dairy alternatives).
- Reassure that snacks and treats are part of a balanced diet, in moderation.
- Encourage them to stay hydrated, aiming for 6-8 glasses of water/milk a day (avoid sugary drinks).