

## How to Support a Young Person Who May Have Eating Difficulties

### Some Key Signs and Symptoms

- Weight loss
- Not wanting to eat meals with the family
- Making excuses for why they're not eating
- Asking for healthy foods or wanting to follow various diets (i.e., vegetarian/ vegan/ gluten free/ raw food/ low carbohydrate)
- Eating unusual food combinations (and this is a new behaviour)
- Having rituals around eating/ preparing food
- Checking food labels or packaging
- Becoming distressed if others prepare food
- Being more active
- Appearing more withdrawn
- Emotionally labile, irritable tearful or generally behaving 'out of character'
- Wearing baggy clothes
- Appearing pre-occupied or unable to concentrate
- Deterioration in academic performance
- Either becomes preoccupied by checking themselves in the mirror and weighing or avoids mirrors altogether
- Complains of feeling the cold
- Periods stop (they make stop asking for feminine hygiene products)

### Top tips on how to approach a young person you have concerns

- Stay calm
- Find time; don't rush the conversation
- Be prepared for a young person to deny or minimise a difficulty
- Be prepared to listen, acknowledge and validate a young person's emotions and thoughts
- Let the young person know you want to understand, help and support

### What to do once you've identified a concern or difficulty

- Let your GP know your concerns and ask for a physical health check
- Contact Hampshire Specialist Eating Disorder Service for more specific help and advice

Tel: 03003040062 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)

Email: [SPNT.HantsCamhsEDT@nhs.net](mailto:SPNT.HantsCamhsEDT@nhs.net)

### Useful Resources for more information:

B-eat:

<https://www.b-eat.co.uk/>

Call: 0345 634 1414

Email: [help@b-eat.co.uk](mailto:help@b-eat.co.uk)

Books:

**Eating Disorders: A Parent's Guide;** by Rachel Bryant-Waugh and Bryan Lask

**Skills-based Learning for Caring for a Loved One with an Eating Disorder;** Janet Treasure, Grainne Smith, Anna Crane