

Threshold Guidance- Eating Difficulties

Name of Young Person:

Staff member supporting:

Has this been completed in collaboration with the YP? Yes/NO

What we do, what we don't do and what you can do if you are worried about your child

Many young people go through phases of dieting and not eating enough. Sometimes this can tip into developing an eating disorder. Here's a guide to help you know how best to support your young person if they are experiencing eating difficulties. This is not an exhaustive list; young people may experience symptoms which may not be included on this guide:

Coping/needs for support; These are experiences that most young people will have from time to time

Type and nature of distress

It is common for children and young people to experience eating difficulties during childhood and adolescence. These tend to be short term, have no impact on physical health or daily functioning (eg, going to school, seeing friends, taking part in hobbies or activities) and can be managed with clear boundaries combined with the love and support of parents/carers.

What you might see or a young person might report	Date Completed	Date completed	Date completed	Date completed
(Tick all those that apply)				
Faddy or fussy eating; only eating a limited repertoire of foods (certain colours, textures, temperatures)				
Wanting to or trying to diet by 'eating healthily' or following food movements such as the 'clean eating', 'raw food', 'vegan'				
Taking a more active interest in food, meal preparation, eg, checking food labels or packaging				
Taking a more active interest in fitness/health or wellbeing				
Increase in activity/exercise				
Talk about body dissatisfaction/worrying about appearance				
Comparing themselves to other people				
Feeling anxious about eating in public/in front of others				
Young people with Type 1 diabetes may become more inconsistent with insulin and diabetes less well managed (this should be checked with a medical team as a matter of priority)				
No longer eating foods they previously enjoyed				

Things to try, support and Next Steps

- Important that all young people eat regularly so insisting upon breakfast, lunch and dinner plus snacks
- Encourage balanced life style; need all food groups (carbohydrates, protein, fats, vegetables and fruits, dairy/ dairy alternatives) plus it's ok to have snacks and treats
- Ensure young people are well hydrated; aim for 6-8 glasses per day (water, milk, avoid sugary drinks)
- Be active with your young person so that you can monitor and ensure they are exercising in a way that is appropriate
- If you are concerned about your child's eating:
 - See your GP (ask for physical health observations to be done- height, weight, blood pressure, pulse)
 - Inform your child's school to share concerns and ask if they have noticed any other concerns
- Monitor and restrict use of apps/gadgets that track exercise and food, eg, My Fitness Pal and Fitbit watches
- Encourage team sports and activities rather than solitary activities such as sport. Ensure food and fluids are had before and after exercise
- Monitor use of social media and ensure only positive accounts are being followed/accessed
- Discourage talking about body concerns, weight or food/eating habits with others

Useful resources:

- For fussy/ faddy eating: Food Refusal and Avoidant Eating in Children; A Practical Guide for Parents and Professionals
- The Self-Esteem Workbook by Lisa Schab
- Banish Your Self-Esteem Thief by Kate Collins-Donnelly
- Banish Your Body-Image Thief by Kate Collins- Donnelly
- Beat (eating disorder charity): <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/>