

Threshold Guidance - Eating Difficulties - Red

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:

Needs Specialist Treatment or a Crisis Response; These are difficulties that cause a significant impact and a young person may need specialist support.

Type and nature of distress

The degree to which a young person experiences eating difficulties may cause the young person distress or might have an impact on their ability to cope with everyday life such as going to, or coping at school, seeing friends or taking part in leisure activities. The family may also be experiencing a degree of stress characterised by; more arguments or disagreements around food/mealtimes or exercise levels/known or suspected vomiting. Other people may be commenting or noticing there is a difficulty or noticing change in weight.

The difficulties may have had a sudden onset at a significant level of concern, or may have been deteriorating gradually over a long period of time.

What you might see or a young person might report	Date Completed	Date completed	Date completed	Date completed
<i>Emergency symptoms – seek immediate medical advice</i> (Tick all those that apply)				
<i>Sudden or rapid weight loss</i>				
<i>Fainting/collapse</i>				
<i>Drowsiness</i>				
<i>Refusing food or drink for more than 24 hours</i>				
<i>Chest pains</i>				
<i>Concerns about daily vomiting</i>				
Significant restriction of food (and fluid) leading to rapid weight loss. This is a concern for both young people that lose weight and become underweight, as well as young people who perhaps are overweight then lose weight and appear a healthy weight. It is the speed of weight loss, not necessarily just their weight that is a concern.				
Young person may avoid eating; excuses such as 'have already eaten', 'not hungry', 'don't feel well'				
Distress prior to, during or after meals. You might notice your young person may want to prepare their own food or eat alone				

Preoccupation with food/eating/ weight or shape or having rituals around eating/preparing food such as weighing food, eating with certain crockery/cutlery				
Unusual eating behaviour such as unusual combinations of food or cutting up food into very small pieces/eating very slowly				
Hiding or throwing food away				
Weight control behaviour including; exercise/increased activity, laxative/diuretic misuse, self-induced vomiting				
Young people with Type 1 diabetes may become more inconsistent with insulin and diabetes less well managed				
Reluctance, avoidance or secrecy of the young person to talk about eating; lack of recognition of concern that others may have or minimising the extent of difficulties				
More withdrawn/lethargic or tired				
Feeling physical unwell; dizzy, light-headed, chest pains, fainting, stomach pains, constipation, coldness				
Symptoms of vomiting including bad breath and swollen or puffy face; poor dental health				
More emotionally labile/more sensitive (upset, irritable, withdrawn) especially when boundaries are put in around food or exercise				
More argumentative (especially around food or mealtimes), may become aggressive and violent				
May hide under baggy clothing				
Either becomes preoccupied by checking themselves in the mirror and weighing or avoids mirrors altogether				
Frequent trips to the bathroom especially after meals				
For girls: periods stop (they make stop asking for feminine hygiene products)				

Things to try, support and Next Steps

- Seek advice and consultation from our Specialist Eating Disorders Team: 03003040062 or email: SPNT.HANTSCAMHSEDT@nhs.net
- Share concerns with your child's school/college
- See your child's GP; ask for physical observations to be taken (including; height, weight, temperature, blood pressure, pulse and request a blood test)
- Important that all young people eat regularly so insisting upon breakfast, lunch and dinner plus snacks. Support and supervise meals and snacks. *If a young person has severely restricted their food and fluid, you must seek advice from a medical professional about restarting eating and drinking as this needs to be done with careful monitoring of physical health.*
- Encourage balanced life style; need all food groups (carbohydrates, protein, vegetables and fruits, dairy/ dairy alternatives) plus it's ok to have snacks

- Ensure young people are well hydrated; aim for 6-8 glasses per day (water, milk, avoid sugary drinks)
- Support your young person to access self-help resources including:
 - YP section- eating difficulties, anxiety, depression (see downloads)
 - Podcasts and Videos Section on our website
- Watch our parent/ carer workshop on:
 - how to support a young person with an eating difficulty here: TO BE ADDED
 - how to support a young person with anxiety: TO BE ADDED
 - how to support a young person with depression: TO BE ADDED
- Inform and access pastoral support from school
- Monitor and restrict use of apps/gadgets that track exercise and food eg, My Fitness Pal or Fitbit watches
- Monitor use of social media and ensure only positive accounts are being followed/accessed

Other Useful resources:

- For fussy/ faddy eating: Food Refusal and Avoidant Eating in Children; A Practical Guide for Parents and Professionals
- Skills based Learning for caring for a Loved One with an Eating Disorder by Janet Treasure, Grainne Smith and Anna Crane
- Anorexia and Other Eating Disorders; How to help Your Child Eat Well and Be Well by Eva Musby
- When your teen has an eating disorder by Lauren Muheim
- 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/>