

Eating disorders (parents and carers)

Every young person's eating habits are different and can change over time. This is normal, but they may have an eating disorder if they:

- Appear underweight
- Worry about their weight/size
- Avoid eating around others and/or are secretive about food.
- Binge eat (eating a lot in one go) or eating very little
- Cutting up food into small pieces to make it appear they have eaten more than they have
- Being sick after meals or making themselves sick
- Excessively exercising

It is good to acknowledge that there are a number of eating disorders, each with different signs and symptoms. See [BEAT](#) for more info on the different disorders and their signs.

Why might my young person have an eating disorder?

It is not always clear what causes eating disorders, but there are things that may influence or trigger it, such as:

- Controlling your emotions
- Anxiety or depression
- Feelings around perfection
- Fear of being or becoming overweight
- Bullying or peer pressure
- Traumatic events
- Loss of control in other parts of your life
- Social and media pressure

Be mindful that eating disorders are **never the fault of the young person**, it is considered to be a **complex mental health disorder** and often a result of the need to feel in control.

How can I help?

The most important thing to do if you are concerned that a young person has an eating disorder is to **seek professional help**, such as speaking with their GP. An eating disorder requires specialist support and is needed to ensure a successful recovery.

Other ways you can support them are:

- Have an open conversation, remember to be mindful of your reactions, stay calm and let them know you are there to listen and want to understand. See [BEAT](#) for more info on how to have a conversation
- Don't force them to eat more, this can cause more distress and may make the problem worse.
- Be patient, eating disorders can't just suddenly stop, it takes time.
- Support them to build upon their self-esteem and develop a good healthy view on their bodies.
- Encourage them to keep talking to others

Supporting a young person with an eating disorder can be emotionally difficult and it is also important that you **look after your own well-being** and seek support if needed.



"Sometimes we all need someone to talk to"



Helpful Resources

[National Eating Disorder Association: Parents tool kit](#)

[BEAT: Eating disorder guide for friends and family](#)

Recovery Record: Eating Disorder management (APP)

Rise up and Recover (APP)

Useful Contacts

Eye to Eye Counselling Service:

01443 202940

Email: info@eyetoeye.wales

Beat Eating Disorders

www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

Online chat and online peer support via website

Childline

0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk (online chat available)

The Mix

0808 808 4994

