SHOULD I BE WORRIED ABOUT MY CHILD'S EATING HABITS?

It's not uncommon for children/young people to go through changes in eating habits. Not all of these will lead to an eating disorder. Your child may have a preference for certain foods, but it is important to remember that this is common for most people. Children/young people may ask for healthier food - there may be a reason i.e. healthy eating week at school. Whilst eating disorders are serious, potentially life threatening mental health conditions, it is important to remember that they are relatively rare.

**Emergency Symptoms - seek immediate medical advice**
- Sudden or rapid weight loss
- Fainting
- Food or fluid refusal longer than 24 hours
- Complaints of chest pains
- Concerns, evidence or information about daily vomiting

**SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**
- Sudden changes in eating habits with no obvious trigger.
- Frequently making excuses for why they are not eating i.e. denial of hunger/feeling sick/already eaten.
- Being more active (increase in exercise) and being disciplined about this or becoming upset if prevented from doing exercise.
- Weight loss (especially if sudden or rapid).
- Complaints of feeling faint or dizzy.
- Complaints of feeling the cold.
- Periods stop (they may stop asking for feminine hygiene products) or become irregular or less regular.
- Tiredness/more lethargic.
- Symptoms of vomiting.
- Dry cracked lips.
- Having rituals around eating or preparing food.

**LINKS**
- Eating Disorder Information
  - www.b-eat.co.uk
- ABC (Anorexia & Bulimia Care)
  - http://www.anorexiabulimiacare.org.uk/

**RESOURCES**
**Books:**
- Skills-based Learning for Caring for a Loved One with an Eating Disorder by Janet Treasure, Grainne Smith, Anna Crane.
- Anorexia and other eating disorders: how to help your child eat well and be well by Eva Musby.
SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS (Continued)

- Checking food labels or packaging obsessively.
- Meticulous weighing of food or scrutiny of calories.
- Becoming distressed if others prepare food.
- Chewing gum and/or drinking a lot of water.
- Finding hidden food around the house.

TOP TIPS

- 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.

FURTHER HELP

- Speak to your child's/young person's school.
- Speak to your doctor.