

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.anorexiabulimiare.org.uk/>

RESOURCES

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 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.