



Family Mental Health Bulletin



April 2021

The focus for this bulletin is:

Eating Disorders

A child who is affected by an eating disorder, may go to great lengths to hide the disorder, and may be in denial about their condition. As a parent, you can play a vital role in identifying the eating disorder, and in helping your child to address both the behaviours and any associated emotional distress.

Common Behaviours

People with an eating disorder tend to have very low self-esteem and will judge themselves very critically in terms of their weight and shape. They become obsessed with food, and their day-to-day lives are usually led by thoughts, feelings and behaviours that focus on food and eating. Sufferers use behaviours (sometimes life threatening) as a way of coping with these difficult thoughts and feelings, including extreme dieting, vomiting, excessive exercise, and binge eating. Many people will feel very ashamed of their symptoms and can gradually distance themselves from friends and family.

Although they can sometimes recognise that what they are doing is unhealthy, because of the strong drive to manage food and weight, sufferers can find it difficult to stop. Eating disorders are associated with a high incidence of other mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.

[Eating Disorders in Young People - a Parent's Guide | Priority Group](#)

Types of Eating Disorder

The most common eating disorders are:

- Anorexia
- Bulimia
- Binge eating disorder [BED]

There is plenty of help and advice on the NHS website and those listed below.

Support Links:

[Advice for parents – Eating disorders - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#) – there is a wide range of information via this NHS website that is written for parents.

A range of advice is available for parents that you can go look at if you have concerns about your son/daughter: [Eating Disorders in Young People - a Parent's Guide | Priority Group](#) – this gives a wide range of advice on eating disorders as well as links to other areas of mental health.

[Layout 1 \(bodywhys.ie\)](#) is another guide for parents that gives a range of information and a good Frequently Asked Questions section.

[Eating Disorder Glossary - Beat HelpFinder \(beateatingdisorders.org.uk\)](#) – this page gives a clear glossary to key terms & professional roles of those who work to support young people with eating disorders.

[Youngminds.org.uk](#) have videos and advice on their parent page of the website

Please Remember:

Talking to your GP or health visitor at your local surgery may be a starting point for you if you have concerns about your son or daughter. Alternatively, there are a range of established sites for parents on this difficult subject that may help you with talking about the concerns at home or identifying any key features.