



Indicates specific advice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Indicates specific advice for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

What is it? (signs and symptoms)

An eating disorder is a complex mental illness. People with eating disorders may have disturbed eating behaviours, distorted beliefs about food, eating, body size, shape and weight. Anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder are common types of eating disorder. These complex disorders are usually influenced by many factors. They occur in men and women of all ages. Some people with an eating disorder may go on to develop other eating disorders or mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety.

Accepting you have an eating disorder isn't easy, but it's important to seek help and treatment as early as possible. If left untreated, eating disorders can cause serious harm to your body and can be life threatening. With proper treatment and support, you can recover. Speaking up is the first step towards recovery.

What can my GP help me? (treatment and management)

It is important to see a GP who you are comfortable with and who you trust. Your GP will work with you to develop a personalised treatment plan. Your GP may also:

- Refer you to a psychologist and/or psychiatrist
- Develop mental health plan with you
- Talk to you about how you're feeling – and encourage you to monitor your feelings with a diary
- Check your physical health, including dental and menstrual health
- Identify a healthy weight range and plan for eating regularly and eating enough.
- Discuss nutritional treatment – a dietitian can help you build a healthy relationship with food
- Talk to you about medications – they may be suitable for some people but are often a short-term option

When should I call an ambulance?

If you are concerned that you or someone else is in immediate danger, or if there is immediate risk to your safety, dial Triple Zero (000) immediately.

How can my GP help me in future?

- Continue to follow up and monitor your progress and your weight
- Talk to you about your thoughts and feelings – and discuss any changes you're noticing
- Refer you to services or health professionals.
- Check your treatment plan – and change the plan if you aren't getting better



Some questions you might like to ask your GP or other mental health professionals:

- What tests do I need?
- How long will I have my eating disorder for?
- Which treatments are most suitable for me?
- Will the treatments affect my weight?
- How much exercise is appropriate for me?
- Where can I learn more about my condition?

EATING DISORDERS IN ADULTS

What can I do?

Be honest with yourself about how you're feeling and what you're struggling with. Be honest with your GP and any other health professionals about your eating disorder and any behaviours you carry out as part of your eating disorder (eg: purging, using laxatives). Don't downplay how serious your symptoms or habits are. Follow your agreed treatment plan. Alcohol and other drugs can make you feel worse. Talk to you GP about support to reduce or quit.

Accept support, and let others help you. Getting regular exercise (that is approved by your GP or specialist) taking time to relax, and maintaining good sleep habits can help. Take time to do activities you value. Connect with people you have positive relationships with. With treatment and support it is possible to recover.

What supports are available?

Phone and online support

The Butterfly Foundation: **1800 33 4673** (1800 ED HOPE) 8am-midnight (except public holidays) or visit thebutterflyfoundation.org.au

Treatment support

Find local services in your area:

- Armidale, Tamworth, New England, North West
- Central Coast
- Lower Hunter, Maitland, Cessnock, Dungog
- Manning, Great Lakes, Taree
- Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens
- Upper Hunter

Out of Area Eating Disorders Programs

There are a number of public and private services in Sydney. Your GP can refer you as an out of area patient:

- Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (public)
- Northside Clinic – Greenwich (private)
- Northside West Clinic – Wentworthville (private)
- Wesley Eating Disorders Centre (private)

Further reading

Butterfly Foundation

www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au

Translated resources 

- **Mental Health in Multicultural Australia**
What is an eating disorder? mhima.org.au
- **Transcultural Mental Health Centre**
dhi.health.nsw.gov.au

Centre for Clinical Intervention

cci.health.wa.gov.au

Private providers

Private providers include Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Social Workers and Dietitians. You may be eligible to access a professional for a reduced fee or without a gap payment. Talk to your GP about your options. To find a private provider, search via the Centre for eating and dieting disorders cedd.org.au

Public Eating Disorders Programs

Specialist Eating Disorders Day Program (Hunter)

The day program offers group therapy, education and meal support, and is located in Newcastle, but accepts out of area referrals. Ask your GP to refer you.

Centre for Psychotherapy Eating Disorders (Hunter)

The centre offers individual and group therapy. Ask your GP to refer you.

Tamworth Hospital Nutrition and Dietetics Department (Hunter)

The hospital department provides dietetic and nutrition counselling. Ask your GP to refer you.

Central Coast Eating Disorders Outpatient Service (Central Coast)

This service is for people of all ages with eating disorders. Phone **4396 5111** for more information.

Families Empowered and Supporting Treatment of Eating Disorders

www.feast-ed.org

Mental Health Carers NSW

www.mentalhealthcarersnsw.org

Sane Australia

www.sane.org

InsideOut Insititute for Eating Disorders

insideoutinstitute.org.au