

10 → THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT EATING DISORDERS

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An eating disorder is a complex mental health disorder.

It is characterised by problematic eating; usually (but not solely) restrictive eating or overeating - or a combination of the two.

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An eating disorder is often born of a need for control. It can be a way of coping with life's stresses.

Eating disorders are often associated with many complicated physical factors. In the early stages people may experience low energy, headaches, aches and pains and/or feeling excessively cold. If an eating disorder develops and becomes more serious, it may be that someone needs hospital treatment to stabilise medical complications, alongside psychological treatment.

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We see on Kooth that giving young people anonymity in getting support helps them feel safe and able to talk about their feelings. They can share more of their anxieties without worrying they'll have to give up control.

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If we can get people early help, they have the best chance of recovery or avoiding becoming poorly. For some, this may take the form of a non specific, preventative approach, whereas for others, a specialist intervention involving a specially trained team will be required.

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An eating disorder isn't just about food. While an over evaluation of the importance of weight and/or shape is usually a central feature, there are all sorts of complicated thought processes that fuel an eating disorder.

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Eating disorders are more common among girls and women, but it's important to note that eating disorders can also affect boys and men too and can start in adulthood.

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Each eating disorder is different. There is no one size fits all approach to treatment: we need to tailor interventions.

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Children in particular often don't choose to access eating disorder services. They're worried about what the treatment is going to entail. They worry about having to give up the control they feel they have worked so hard to achieve through their eating/weight control.

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The most common approaches with the best evidence bases are cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and family therapy, though other combinations of approaches can be beneficial too.