



Eating disorders

Children's attitudes to eating are affected by a range of factors including the attitudes and behaviours of parent and peers towards food, nutrition and body image, trauma, stress, and bullying. Appetites may change at different ages and this is normal; some eat a lot or eat anything, others are more particular. Younger children often refuse to eat certain foods and teenagers may try 'fad diets'. Most of us have tried out different eating habits or diets at some time in our lives, whether to lose or put on weight, or to improve our health and this is not necessarily a cause for concern.

Problems can start to emerge when a child or young person feels under pressure. They may lose their appetite; or they may turn to food for comfort and eat even when they are not hungry; their worries about food may be related to their size or body shape, or can be more about their emotions and self-esteem.

Young people's problems with food can begin as a coping strategy for times when they are bored, anxious, angry, lonely, ashamed or sad. Food becomes a problem when it is used to help cope with painful situations or feelings, or to relieve stress, perhaps without even realising it. Children can fear getting fat and may perceive their body shape differently than those around them. It is useful to know that an eating problem is usually

symptomatic and suggests there is an underlying problem that needs to be identified, understood and treated.

Young people with eating disorders often consider them to be a solution rather than a problem, making identification and treatment more difficult. They tend to have extreme concerns and sense of self-worth in terms of body shape and weight.

**Beat is the UK's eating disorder charity.
We are a champion, guide and friend
for anyone affected by an eating disorder.**

Help for adults

Helpline: 0808 801 0677

Email: help@beat-eatingdisorders.org.uk

Help for young people

Youthline: 0808 801 0711

Email: fyp@beat-eatingdisorders.org.uk

Help for students

Helpline: 0808 801 0811

Email: studentline@beat-eatingdisorders.org.uk



Worrying about things is normal

Eating disorders. Know the first signs?



Lips

Are they obsessive about food?



Flips

Is their behaviour changing?



Hips

Do they have distorted beliefs about their body size?



Kips

Are they often tired or struggling to concentrate?



Nips

Do they disappear to the toilet after meals?



Skips

Have they started exercising excessively?

If you're worried someone you care about is showing any signs of an eating disorder – even if they're not on our list – act quickly and get in touch. We can give you the answers and support you need to help them on the road to recovery as soon as possible.

Don't delay. Visit beateatingdisorders.org.uk/tips

