



Could my child have an eating disorder?

A guide for parents

It can sometimes be difficult to tell when a child's relationship with food, body image, or exercise becomes a problem. Eating disorders often develop gradually, and many young people go to great lengths to hide their struggles. It's not unusual for parents to only seek help once disordered eating has evolved into a diagnosable Eating Disorder. As a parent, trusting your instincts and noticing changes early can make a big difference to how quickly and easily treatment can help.

Warning Sign	Examples
Changes in eating habits	<p>Skipping meals, eating very little, or claiming to have already eaten</p> <p>Dieting, or cutting out whole food groups</p> <p>Avoiding eating in front of others, and/or hiding food</p>
Concerns about weight or body shape	<p>Frequently checking appearance in the mirror</p> <p>Worry about how they look and/or seeking reassurance</p> <p>Hiding their body in baggy clothing</p> <p>Looking at diet-related content online regularly</p>
Emotional and behavioural changes	<p>Increased irritability, anxiety, or mood swings</p> <p>Withdrawal from friends and/or family</p> <p>Perfectionism and/or sensitivity to criticism</p> <p>Loss of interest in things they used to enjoy</p>
Changes in exercise patterns	<p>Exercising excessively (even if sick or injured)</p> <p>Distress if unable to exercise</p> <p>Linking exercise directly to food intake/weight</p>
Physical warning signs	<p>Noticeable weight loss or fluctuation</p> <p>Poor concentration, fatigue, dizziness, or fainting</p> <p>Feeling the cold, and/or wearing many layers</p> <p>Blue hands, feet, and/or lips</p> <p>Changes to menstrual cycle (if applicable)</p>



What to do if you're concerned

Start with a calm, caring conversation

Focus on how they're feeling rather than what they're eating. Avoid blaming or trying to force change. Say something like, "I've noticed you seem stressed lately and that your eating patterns have changed. I'm worried about you. I'm here for you, and I'd like us to talk to someone who can help."

Speak to your GP

Eating disorders are serious medical and psychological conditions, but they are treatable. Speak to your GP as soon as possible. Early support can lead to better outcomes.

Your GP may check your child's weight, heart rate, and blood pressure (if there has been weight loss this is usually seated or lying down, then standing up for comparison). They might also ask for blood tests to be done, and/or an electrocardiogram to check the pattern of electrical activity in their heart.

Get your treatment team in place

If your GP agrees that there is cause for concern, they will make recommendations about where you can seek ongoing psychological, dietetic, and psychiatric follow-up as necessary and provide you with a referral.

Don't give up!

It can be confronting to learn that your child has an eating disorder. Make sure you get the support that you need, too.



Get in touch!

At Balanced: Mind Body Life we have clinicians with many years of experience in the treatment of adolescents and young people with Eating Disorders. If you are concerned about your child or teenager and would like to book an assessment and/or ongoing treatment, you can reach out to us. Medicare rebates apply if you have a referral from your GP.

Phone: 0475 000 679

Email: admin@balancedtas.com

You can also fill out our contact form at www.tasmindbodylife.com