



Patient & Family Guide

2024

# Assessment for Eating Disorders in Children and Adolescents



[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# Assessment for Eating Disorders in Children and Adolescents

## What will happen before the assessment?

- An eating disorder assessment can be done:
  - › In person at your local mental health clinic**or**
  - › Virtually (online)

Please let us know what you would prefer.

- **All caregivers should go to the assessment with the child or adolescent (teen).**
- Your child or adolescent will be referred to a dietitian for a nutritional assessment. This appointment is separate from the eating disorder assessment. This appointment helps us learn about:
  - › Changes in their eating patterns over time
  - › Changes in their height and weight
  - › Their growth and development for their age and sex
- Your child or adolescent will have a physical exam. This is usually done by their primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner). **Please book this appointment as soon as you can.**

- The physical exam will include:
  - › Taking their vital signs (blood pressure, heart rate, temperature)
  - › Weighing them
  - › Checking other physical health indicators
- They will also ask your child or adolescent to have blood work and an electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG) to check their heart.

**If your child or adolescent does not have a primary health care provider:**

- › They may be able to have a physical exam with a community mental health nurse in our mental health clinic.

**or**

- › We will help you connect with a walk-in clinic or a primary care clinic that provides short-term primary medical care for people on the Need a Family Practice Registry.
  - › Your appointment may be in-person or online. **Primary care clinics do not offer walk-in services. All appointments must be booked in advance.**
- Please arrive 5 minutes before your appointment to register.
- An assessment usually takes about 1 ½ to 2 hours.

### **If you need to cancel an appointment:**

- › **You must give at least 24 hours (1 day) notice.**

Call your local mental health clinic to cancel the appointment and tell them if you would like to reschedule. They will contact you when another appointment is available.

### **What should we bring to the assessment?**

- Any medical records or older assessments that you think may help, if available
- A list of all your child or adolescent's current medications, including:
  - › Drops
  - › Puffers and inhalers
  - › Patches
  - › Injections
  - › Creams and ointments
  - › Herbal products and vitamins
  - › Over-the-counter and prescription medications
- Any questions or concerns you have
- A weight scale (if your appointment is virtual)

## **What will happen during the assessment?**

- The assessment will help our team learn about their:
  - › Medical history
  - › Eating behaviours
  - › Emotions (feelings)
  - › Thoughts about eating and body image
- A mental health clinician will go over what will happen during the assessment. They will review consent with you and document your decision.
- If you are being seen in person, we will measure your child or adolescent's height and weight. If you are being seen virtually, we will ask you to measure their height and weight during the assessment. We also ask that they be weighed by their primary health care provider.
- The clinician will spend some time alone with your child or adolescent. They will talk with them to learn more about the emotional and psychological parts of their eating disorder. They may also use interviews or questionnaires.
- The clinician will meet with you alone to learn about your concerns.

- After the assessment, or in a follow-up session, the clinician will go over the results. They will talk with you about treatment options, like:
  - › Therapy
  - › Nutritional counselling
  - › Medical monitoring (checking your blood pressure, pulse, height, and weight, and ordering tests, like blood work or an electrocardiogram, if needed)
- During the assessment process, we will offer support and teach you and your child or adolescent about eating disorders. It is very important for your child or adolescent's recovery to understand eating disorders, including:
  - › How they work
  - › What effects they can have
  - › Treatment options

## **What will happen after the assessment?**

- The clinician will recommend treatment and medical monitoring for your child or adolescent. **It is important to follow these recommendations and book appointments with your child or adolescent's primary health care provider.**

- Once a treatment is chosen, your child or adolescent will be referred to a clinician who specializes in that treatment.
- Your child or adolescent may have to wait for treatment. We will call you when the clinician becomes available.

## Resources

Visit the links or scan the QR codes on your smartphone (open the camera on your smartphone, point the camera at the code, and tap the banner or border that appears):

*Does my child or adolescent have an eating disorder?*

- › [www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/2306](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/2306)



*When should I be worried about my relationship with food and exercise?*

- › [www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/2296](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/2296)



*How to Support Your Child or Adolescent With Eating When They Have an Eating Disorder*

- › [www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/2318](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/2318)



# *Family-based Treatment for Eating Disorders in Children and Adolescents*

- › [www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/2325](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/2325)



This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:  
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

*Prepared by:* Nova Scotia Eating Disorder Provincial Service  
*Designed by:* Nova Scotia Health Library Services

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