

Does my child or adolescent have an eating disorder?

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This guide explains what to do if you think your child or adolescent (teen) may have an eating disorder. Your support is very important in helping your child or adolescent.

How can I tell if my child or adolescent has an eating disorder?

Your child or adolescent may be focused on:

- Controlling their weight by:
 - › dieting
 - › bingeing (eating a large amount of food in a short amount of time, and feeling they have no control over this)
 - › purging (vomiting [throwing up] or other behaviours to get rid of food they have eaten)
 - › exercise that goes beyond being fun and enjoyable. They are often rigid (not able to change) and feel like they have to exercise.

- They may be obsessed with food and nutrition by:
 - › counting calories
 - › reading nutrition labels
 - › no longer eating certain foods
 - › suddenly having new sensitivities to certain foods
 - › not being willing to eat new foods

What can I do to help?

When your child or adolescent loses weight or does not grow as expected, it is normal to be worried. There are many things you can do to help:

- Show your child or adolescent what normal eating means. There are no good or bad foods. All foods are OK.
- Eat with your child or adolescent. Encourage them to eat 3 meals plus 3 snacks a day.
- Take note of any changes in behaviour (like changes in exercise, eating, or routines).
- Use community supports.
- Take your child or adolescent to see their primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) regularly.

The sooner an eating disorder is found, the easier it is to treat. If you are worried that your child or adolescent might have an eating disorder, call Nova Scotia Mental Health and Addictions to refer them for treatment right away.

› Phone (toll-free): 1-855-922-1122

Eating disorder health care providers are available across the province. Online and in-person services are available.

Resources

Books:

Le Grange, D., Lock, L. (2015). *Help Your Teenager Beat an Eating Disorder*, 2nd Edition. The Guilford Press.

Mulheim, L. (2018). *When Your Teen Has an Eating Disorder: Practical Strategies to Help Your Teen Recover from Anorexia, Bulimia & Binge Eating*. New Harbinger Publications.

Websites:

Eating Disorders Nova Scotia

- › <https://eatingdisordersns.ca/>

National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC) - Canada

- › <https://nedic.ca/helping-your-child/>

Kelty Eating Disorders – BC Children’s Hospital™

- › <https://keltyeatingdisorders.ca/>

Eating disorders: Important things to know - Kids Help Phone

- › <https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/eating-disorders-important-things-to-know/>

AboutKidsHealth - The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids®)

- › www.aboutkidshealth.ca/ (search “eating disorders”)

National Eating Disorders Association - United States

- › www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/

Maudsley Parents – A site for parents of eating disordered children

› www.maudsleyparents.org/

F.E.A.S.T.: Families Empowered And Supporting Treatment for Eating Disorders

› www.feast-ed.org/

I'm worried that my child has an eating disorder - A Guide to Discussing Your Concerns with Their Primary Care Provider

› <https://bodyprideca.files.wordpress.com/2019/05/parents-carers-checklist-for-pcp.pdf>

Understanding Eating Disorders in Adolescents

› www.canped.ca

Trust your instincts — you know when there is something wrong with your child or adolescent.

Notes:

Looking for more health information?

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

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

Nova Scotia Health promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.

Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!

www.nshealth.ca

Prepared by: Nova Scotia Eating Disorder Provincial Service, Nova Scotia Health & IWK Health

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If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

WM85-2306 © August 2022 Nova Scotia Health Authority

The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.