



# Eating Disorder Awareness

## What Parents and Educators Need to Know

**Eating Disorders** are a very serious issue globally. They are not a fad, phase or lifestyle choice. They are potentially life-threatening conditions affecting every aspect of the person's functioning. The mindset of eating disorders can start as young as five years old that affect both boys and girls. If they can be diagnosed early on then they are treatable with a variety of solutions. It is important for parents and educators to know the signs and symptoms of eating disorders so that children can get help earlier on.

It is important to note that symptoms may vary between males and females and in age groups. Often younger people struggling with an eating disorder may either not know they have it or may keep it a secret. Eating disorders can be diagnosed based on weight changes, but also based on behaviors, attitudes and mindset. Be alert for any of these signs in your child.

After reviewing the information here, if you think your child may be showing signs of a possible eating disorder, please contact your primary health care provider, school nurse, or the national helpline for eating disorders at 1-800-931-2237.

### Key behaviors to watch for around food

- Eating a lot of food that seems out of control
- Develops food rules—may eat only a particular food or food group, cuts food into very small pieces, or spreads food out on the plate
- Talks a lot about, or focuses often, on weight, food, calories, fat grams, and dieting
- Skips meals or takes small portions of food at regular meals
- Cooks meals or treats for others but won't eat them
- Avoids mealtimes or situations involving food
- Goes to the bathroom after meals often
- Uses a lot of mouthwash, mints, and/or gum

### Key behaviors around activity

- Exercises all the time despite weather, fatigue, illness, or injury
- Stops doing their regular activities, spends more time alone

### Physical symptoms

- Feels cold all the time or complains of being tired all the time
- Likely to become more irritable and/or nervous
- Any use of laxatives or diuretics

### Mental/emotional symptoms

- Believes that they are too big or too fat
- Asks often to be reassured about how they look
- Stops hanging out with their friends

### Want to learn more?

Visit the National Eating Disorder Association:

<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/>