Eating Disorders

What is an Eating Disorder?

The Canadian Mental Health Association defines eating disorders as a group of mental illnesses that alter one's feelings and relationships with food and their body. There are three main eating disorders: anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder.

Risk Factors

Although there is no specific cause, there are multiple factors that can contribute to the development of an eating disorder:

- genetics - family history of eating disorders
- psychological - low self-esteem, body dysmorphia, perfectionist tendencies, high stress, childhood trauma, and exposure to abuse
- social - the use of social media and exposure to unattainable "Beauty Standards"
- chronic dieting, chronic exercise, and dysfunctional eating habits

Canadian Mental Health Association (CAMH) and The National Eating Disorder Foundation of Canada (EDFC)

Canadian Statistics

Statistics show:

- up to 40% of 9-year-old girls have tried a diet to lose weight
- 81% of 10-year-olds are afraid to be overweight
- 35-57% of adolescent girls engage in dieting
- 42% of 1st to 3rd graders want to be thinner
- 9-25% of boys between the ages of 10-14 report dieting to lose weight
- in high school students, disordered eating is prevalent in 17% of females and 8% of males
- the incidence of eating disorders is 2 to 4 times greater than Type 2 Diabetes in Canadian children
- it is estimated that 1.7 million people suffer from eating disorders in Canada

Canada Mental Health Association (CAMH) and National Initiative for Eating Disorders (NIED)

Health Consequences

Having an eating disorder can result in many health consequences which vary depending on the eating disorder your loved one may be dealing with.

Some symptoms are as follows:

- fatigue with risk of fainting
- acid reflux which can result in tooth decay
- high blood pressure/high cholesterol
- sleep apnea/breathing difficulties
- inflammation or ruptured esophagus
- diabetes
- muscle loss or weakness
- dehydration/kidney failure
- slow heart rate/heart failure
- death

Canada Mental Health Association (CMHA)

Treatment

- counselling, therapy, and support groups
- nutritional guidance aiming to provide education about food and maintaining a healthy relationship with eating
- in-patient (hospitalization) and out-patient clinic programs
- medical professionals may prescribe medications for anxiety and depression (always contact a doctor before beginning a medication regimen)

Canada Mental Health Association (CMHA)

How Can You Help in the Recovery Process?

- learn and understand the behaviours
- be consistent - stick to their treatment plan, create rules and routine
- eliminate triggers - remove scales and diet books/magazines from the environment
- set a positive example
- engage with their recovery journey
- make mealtime a calm place; don't watch your child eat or comment on how much or little they are eating
- supervise exercise time - watch for overexertion

HTTPS://KELTYEATINGDISORDERS.CA/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2016/09/BCMH026_EATINGDISORDER_FULLGUIDE_V6-WEB.PDF

Mental Health Estrie

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Anorexia Nervosa

Anorexia nervosa revolves around the fear of gaining weight. The individual may restrict their food consumption to lose weight or keep their weight at a specific number.

Signs and Symptoms

- Dramatic weight loss
- Denial of hunger
- Excessive exercise
- Dry skin, brittle nails, thinning hair
- Downy hair covering body called "Lanugo"
- Loss of, or disrupted, menstruation
- Inaccurate perceptions of weight

Bulimia Nervosa

Bulimia nervosa is characterized by a loss of control when eating. The individual may consume large amounts of food in a short period of time and purge afterward to rid themselves of the calories. It is not as obvious as anorexia nervosa but it is just as severe.

Signs and Symptoms

- Fluctuation in body weight (gain and loss)
- Hiding food or eating in private
- Discolored teeth or tooth decay
- Signs of purging:
  - frequent trips to the bathroom
  - running water in the sink or shower to cover the sounds of purging
  - using a lot of mouthwash, breath mints, and perfumes to disguise the smell of vomit
  - frequent complaints of sore throat, stomach ache and bowel disturbances

Binge Eating Disorder

Binge eating is categorized as "compulsive overeating". The individual will consume large amounts of food in a short amount of time. This may happen multiple times a day.

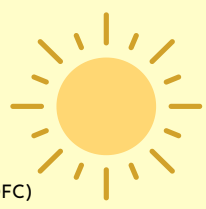
Signs and Symptoms

- Consuming large amounts of food in a short amount of time
- Hiding food and eating in private
- Eating when not hungry
- Eating past the point of discomfort
- Weight gain

Coping Techniques to Support Your Loved One

Help your loved one:

- create a toolbox containing various calming activities (books, puzzles, notepad and pen, sketchbook, music, etc.)
- grow their support system - find people who are safe and supportive
- create a deck of cards with compliments on them; encourage your loved one to pick a card when they are not feeling well
- get a journal to log their thoughts and feelings
- be aware of how they speak about themselves (we believe what we tell ourselves)
- practice self-care (e.g., mindfulness, meditation, yoga, hygiene routine, reading, etc.)
- spend time with nature; being outdoors can encourage feelings of calmness
- learn a new hobby to reduce the time for their mind to wander



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Mental Health Estrie offers a **support group** for family and friends caregiving to a loved one impacted by mental illness.

Resources For You and Your Loved One

Individual **(I)** - Caregiver **(C)**

- Aire ouverte Estrie (ages 12-25)– CIUSSSE - (819) 572-2473 **(I)**
- Arrimage Estrie (17 years +) - (819) 564-7885 **(I/C)**
- Anorexie et Boulimie Quebec (17 years +) - 1 (800) 630-0907 / (514) 630-0907 (Montreal) **(I)**
- CIUSSS de l'Estrie - CHUS Hospitals' Easting Disorders clinic (referral from general practitioner required) **(I)**
- BACA Eating Disorder Clinic (Montreal) - (514) 544-2323 **(I)**
- AMI-Québec (Montreal) - (514) 486-1448 **(C)**
- Call 811 or your local CSLC for additional support, resources, and referrals **(I/C)**
- Mental Health Estrie - Info and Referral service (see contact information below) **(I/C)**

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The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent rhe views of the Public Health Agency of Canada or of the CHSSN