

When and how to help someone with an eating disorder

Anyone can have an eating disorder and you can't tell if someone has one just by looking at them.

Someone struggling with an eating disorder may display a combination of symptoms, only one symptom or may try and hide their behaviours.



When should I be worried?



Physical signs

Rapid weight changes (loss or gain), loss of periods, fainting or dizziness, low energy and tiredness, signs of vomiting including swollen cheeks or damage to teeth.



Psychological signs

Preoccupation with food, body shape and weight, anxiety or feeling out of control around food and mealtimes, distorted body image, using food as comfort or self-punishment.



Behavioural signs

Dieting, fasting, counting calories or cutting out food groups, eating in private and avoiding meals, frequent trips to the bathroom during or shortly after meals, compulsive or excessive exercising, obsessive rituals around food preparation and eating, secretive behaviour around food.

What should I do?



Have a conversation

It can be hard to approach someone who you think may have an eating disorder but remember that intervening early is important to reduce the illnesses' severity and duration. Choose a time and place when they feel comfortable, be open, non-judgmental and encourage them to reach out to their trusted GP or health professional.



Screening Tool

Use the simple, free and anonymous screening tool on Butterfly's website to help determine whether you or someone you care about might have an eating disorder: www.butterfly.org.au/areyouatrisk



Butterfly National Helpline

For support with eating disorders or body image concerns, call 1800 ED HOPE (1800 33 4673), chat online or email support@butterfly.org.au
Free support is available 7 days a week, 8am-midnight, (AEST/AEDT), for anyone anywhere in Australia.