

What can you do?

If you think your friend or family member may have an eating disorder, here are a few tips on how to approach the subject.

Approach the subject with acceptance and compassion

- Educate yourself about eating disorders and what can happen if they are left untreated
- Rehearse what you want to say to reduce anxiety

Express empathy and do not judge

- Remove stigma by reassuring the individual that there is no shame in admitting that they struggle with disordered eating
- Use “I” statements to express what you have noticed
- Show empathy and describe concerning behaviours
- Avoid overly simplistic solutions like, “just eat” or “stop obsessing about what you look like”

Be caring, but be firm and encourage individual to seek professional help



*National Eating Disorders Association, 2018
National Eating Disorder Information Centre, 2017*

Resources

Local Eating Disorders Program (or MHSU office) locations

Cranbrook	250.420.2210
Creston	250.428.8734
Sparwood	250.425.2064
Golden	250.344.3015
Invermere	250.342.2363
Kimberley	250.427.2215
Kamloops and Cariboo	250.377.6500
Central Okanagan (Kelowna and area)	250.469.7070 Ext. 13553
Kootenay Boundary	250.505.7252
Revelstoke	250.837.7612
Salmon Arm	250.832.1719
South Okanagan (Penticton and area)	250.770.3555
Vernon	250.549.5404
Crisis Line	I-888-CARE(2273) I-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)
(Aboriginal)	I-800-588-8747

Helpful Resources & Websites

JessiesLegacy.com	604.988.5281
LookingGlassBC.com	604 829 2585
KeltyEatingDisorders.ca	604 875 2084 I-800-665-1822

University Wellness Center Label



Interior Health
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Eating Disorders in Universities & Colleges



What are eating disorders?

Eating Disorders (EDs) are **serious psychiatric illnesses** characterized by unhealthy thoughts and behaviours towards food, weight, and body shape. They are the **most deadly** of all mental illnesses and are **NOT a choice**. These can include:

- Anorexia Nervosa (AN) is a potentially lifethreatening disorder that is characterized by self-starvation, extreme weight loss, extreme obsession over body size, body image disturbances, and denial of the seriousness of extremely low weight.
- Bulimia Nervosa (BN) is characterized by recurring food restriction followed by binge eating and compensatory behaviours such as self-induced vomiting to counteract the effects of binge eating.
- Binge Eating Disorder (BED) is the recurring episodes of binge eating without the use of compensatory behaviours. During these episodes, individuals may feel out of control. Right after the binge, they may feel shame, guilt and distress.



Did you know?

AN has the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric illness.

It is estimated that **10% of people with AN will die** within 10 years of the onset of the disorder.

Young people, **ages 14 – 25 are most at risk** of developing an eating disorder and the prevalence rate is between 2 – 3% of the population.

University students are at a very vulnerable stage in their lives.

Some leave home for the very first time and/or have to adjust to a new city. Being in university can bring about challenging emotions and stress.

Students may experience **pressure** to maintain good grades; **challenges** with balancing work and school or limited finances; challenges managing expectations from parents and peers; and the **stresses** of becoming an adult. For some students, all of these may make them feel like they are **losing control of their lives**.

Students may adopt **unhealthy coping strategies** to manage challenging emotions and stress. This may include dieting, overeating, strenuous exercise or different ways of purging.

What to look for?

General signs and symptoms include:

- Marked weight loss, gain, or fluctuations
- Perfectionism and excessive concern with body image, calories and weight
- Guilt and shame about eating
- Excessive exercising
- Intolerance to cold
- Weakness, fatigue, lethargy
- Dizziness and fainting episodes
- Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)
- Hair loss
- Amenorrhea or irregular period in women
- Dental erosion
- Poor concentration
- Social withdrawal
- Mood changes (anxiety, depression, mood swings)

If left untreated, more serious consequences include:

- **Anorexia Nervosa** – Heart failure, muscle loss, osteoporosis.
- **Bulimia Nervosa** – Heart failure, gastric rupture, pancreatitis, and tooth decay.
- **Binge Eating Disorder** – Type II Diabetes, heart disease, gallbladder disease, and gastric rupture.