

PATIENT INFORMATION

Devon CAMHS Paediatric Eating Disorders

Information Guide

Welcome to Devon Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

Our service helps young people who have an eating disorder (Anorexia Nervosa) by working with them and their families using the Maudsley family-based therapy model.

What is an eating disorder?

Eating disorders are characterised by an abnormal attitude towards food that causes someone to change their eating habits and behaviour.

A person with an eating disorder may focus excessively on their weight and shape. This can lead to them making unhealthy choices about food with damaging results to their health.

Causes for an eating disorder can be biological as well environmental. The factors are usually complex and may involve those factors that provoke the disorder as well as those that continue it.

Risk factors that can make someone more likely to have an eating disorder include:

- Having a family history of eating disordered, depression or substance misuse
- Being criticised for their eating habits, body shape or weight
- Being overly concerned with being slim, particularly if combined with pressure to be slim from society or for a job (for example ballet dancers, models, or athletes)
- Certain characteristics, for example, having an obsessive personality, an anxiety disorder, low self-esteem or being a perfectionist
- Particular experiences, such as sexual or emotional abuse, or the death of someone special
- Difficult relationships with family members or friends
- Stressful situations, for example problems at work, school or university

Treatment for an eating disorder

We will assess your needs and treatment may include the following, according to your needs.

- Family therapy to support all family members to understand the illness and find ways of making a difference to help the young person to recovery
 - Multi-family group therapy (four consecutive days of intensive therapy alongside other families managing the similar difficulties)
 - Appointments with the local paediatrician to make sure the illness does not impact severely on physical wellbeing. Restricting food and remaining underweight for a prolonged amount of time can be extremely dangerous to the body and its vital organs. A paediatrician will review the young person regularly to keep them as safe as possible
 - Psychiatry to make sure there is nothing we are missing to prescribe medication when helpful
 - Individual therapy to work closely with the young person and look at how thought affect feelings, which in turn affect behaviours. This also helps to build a relationship where the young person can begin to share thoughts and feelings that get in the way of recovery
 - A dietician will help understand exactly how much and what type of food needs to be eaten to re-gain weight and to recover from effects of an eating disorder
 - Supported meals at home. It is sometimes helpful to have a support worker visit the home to offer encouragement at mealtimes and to support the parent or carer in taking on this difficult role
 - Your GP will remain involved at all times to support the young person and their family towards recovery

Our therapies are evidence-based and we strive to offer the most effective treatments to help overcome the eating disorder.

However, as all families are different, we will also ask you to complete outcome measures to help us understand how therapy is progressing.

We are always looking into new research to develop our work as effectively as possible.

Why is intervention important?

The aim of the interventions is to help the young person, with the aid of the family, to return to a healthy weight for age and height, as well as eating meals in a normal way. We do this by encouraging the young person to eat again in graduated steps with the help of all the family.

Once they are eating more regular meals and weight is gradually getting back to normal, we can help to address any problems that may have been present prior to the eating disorder developing. We will then start to look more at the ways to prevent a relapse.

Family therapy will help to support all family members towards recovery. Parents and carers are crucial in this work, so we make sure they are aware of the physical dangers of the illness and support them as habits are challenged.

Where will therapy be provided?

Our priority is to ensure physical safety, and we hope that young people can remain living at home during their recovery. Specialist outpatient appointments will take place mainly at your local CAMHS site.

There may be times when hospital admission might be necessary and our local paediatric ward will admit for a three week period of supported feeding. During this admission, we will ask the young person to have bed rest and not do any other activities on the ward, such as schoolwork. The focus will be on getting well, so we do not allow mobile phones or internet use, except during supervised periods.

The aim is to prevent the need for admission to a specialist child and adolescent mental health unit or specialist eating disorder unit, which would be for a longer period of time.

Will my child require medication?

For some young people, it may be necessary to help manage some of the strong worries and thought with some medication. This will be managed by the child and adolescent psychiatrist. They will assess to see if medication would be helpful in treating the eating disorder.

Devon CAMHS eating disorder pathway

In recent years, we have changed our eating disorder pathway dramatically, and now have a very good success rate with young people conquering their eating disorders when the young person and the family work together with our team of health professionals.

We constantly work to ensure that there is a fully equitable service across the country. Any feedback you can give us is greatly valued, as it helps us to be the best that we can be.

Additional resources

“Help your Teenager Beat an Eating Disorder” by James Lock and Daniel Le Grange

This book can offer guidance when going through the difficult process of change.

For more information about the Maudsley family-based therapy model, please visit www.maudsleyparents.org

The B-EAT website also offers excellent information and support as well as details for local support groups for carers. Please visit www.b-eat.co.uk

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Your Notes

www.childrenandfamilyhealthdevon.nhs.uk

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.