

# Help for eating disorders

Published 20 December 2005.

More and more young women are affected by eating disorders. In eating disorders controlling your weight and your own body becomes compulsive and everyday life begins to revolve around food and weight control. Gradually your ideas of your eating and the limits of your own body begin to become distorted.

Eating disorders are burdening both mentally and physically and their affect on your well-being is evident. The role of mental well-being in eating disorders can be considered from several viewpoints. On the one hand, it can be said that mental factors such as low self-esteem and depression contribute to the development of eating disorders. On the other hand, eating disorders can decrease your mental well-being which may be manifested e.g. as reduced energy level, relationship problems or general discontentment.

Eating disorders usually begin in early teenage years, at 12-14 years or in early adulthood, at 17-20 years. At the moment eating disorders are considerably more common for women and girls than for men and boys. However, the number of men suffering from eating disorders has been increasing during the past few years. An eating disorder is a serious condition that often requires professional help. You are more likely to recover if you seek help soon and an intervention happens at an early stage. Do not try to tackle the problem alone, but seek help immediately.

## Public health care:

- health care services at schools
- health centres
- clinics specialising in eating disorders
- psychiatric clinics

School nurses and school or health centre doctors can refer you to actual treatment. Their role in diagnosing eating disorders and referring patients to proper treatment is very important. Eating disorders are usually treated at the central hospital of the area.

Eating disorders are treated on several levels. The treatment includes e.g. nutritional guidance, monitoring of the somatic well-being as well as group and individual therapy discussions. A multi-professional team is involved in the treatment, including e.g. a doctor, a psychologist, a nurse, a physiotherapist and a dietician. If the patient requires inpatient treatment, the treatment is often started at the internal medicine ward and then transferred to the psychiatric unit. The Helsinki University Hospital has an eating disorder clinic that operates in connection with the psychiatric clinic and offers both out- and inpatient treatment.

## Friends and family

The support of friends and family is an important part of the recovery process. Usually the first step toward recovery is to venture to tell a close friend or family member about the problem. It may be difficult to talk about the disorder to a family member at first and in this situation a close friend can offer vital support. The importance of the support from friends and family continues throughout the recovery process.

## Anonymous discussion help and discussion groups

Discussion help is also available through the various anonymous discussion services, for example telephone helplines or discussion and support groups for women with eating disorders. Overeaters Anonymous offers both telephone discussions and discussion groups. Guided discussion groups for people with eating disorders are arranged at the Finnish Association for Mental Health and - if you are a student in the capital area - at Nyyti ry. Information and peer support groups also in English at [Etelän-Syli ry](#).

## Therapy services

Psychotherapy is often used in the treatment of eating disorders. It is used when the acute stage of the disorder has been passed. Psychotherapy services are offered by e.g. private psychotherapy foundations and, for students, YTHS, the

Finnish Student Health Service. It is possible to receive financial support for the therapy from KELA, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland.

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[Links](#) ▶

[OA](#) - Overeaters Anonymous

[Nyyti ry](#).

[The Finnish Association for Mental Health](#)

[The Eating Disorder Association of Finland](#)

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