

Outpatient Treatment Team for Eating Disorders

Appropriate treatment requires intervention on multiple levels from professionals with different talents and expertise. Professionals will be needed to address:

- *Physical Health*
- *Mental Health*
- *Nutrition*

The degree of involvement of each team member may vary along the course of treatment.

Establish the Treatment Team

Schedule appointments with the recommended specialists and therapists. Complete medical records releases so we can all communicate.

Physical Health

Eating disorders are complicated illnesses and affect the body in potentially profound and devastating ways.

_____ **Primary Care Physician**

Your primary care physician will assess your child's physiological state, monitoring vital signs, hydration status, weight, electrolyte balance, bone density, other pertinent laboratory values and mental health. Often acting as the "ship captain," your primary care physician helps to coordinate care between other professionals. Your doctor may manage medications directly or coordinate this with a psychiatrist.

_____ **Bloodwork needed**

_____ **Cardiologist**

Many patients require referral to a cardiologist, as there can be very dangerous heart and circulatory complications resulting from anorexia or bulimia. Patients may experience symptoms ranging from instability in blood pressure (causing dizziness or near-fainting) to heart rate slowing to heart muscle and valve damage or worse.

_____ **Gastroenterologist**

Eating disorders can affect the function of the gut – from the mouth to the rectum, sometimes necessitating assistance from a gastroenterologist.

_____ **Dentist**

Oral complications of bulimia and malnutrition may require the attention of a dentist.

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Mental Health

Patients with eating disorders experience significant psychological distress related to their condition.

Eating Disorders affect the entire family - parents and siblings need help also. Often we recommend parents and/or close loved ones work with a separate individual or family therapist to learn how to help patients in their recovery. This can be done individually or in groups.

Individual therapist or counselor (PhD, PsyD LMSW, LPC)

An experienced therapist/counselor helps patients work through the chaos of thoughts and emotions that they feel about food and body image. Very often, eating disorders evolve as inappropriate responses to underlying stress. A therapist's help in learning to use healthier, more appropriate coping strategies is crucial to long-term recovery.

Group therapy

Groups run by an experienced, licensed professional can be a useful addition to a comprehensive treatment strategy. There is great power and support in peer involvement.

Family Therapy

Family involvement is important to ensuring recovery.

Parent's Group

Expand knowledge of eating disorders, to understand family dynamics, to improve communication and to provide appropriate support.

Sibling Group

Siblings need support, comfort and knowledge of eating disorders to deal with the disruptions in their family.

Psychiatrist (MD)

Many eating disorder patients require the assistance of a medical physician specializing in mental health. The psychiatrist (MD) can help assess mental function and manage psychiatric medications when necessary.

Nutrition

Eating disorders destroy natural cues about when and what to eat (or not to eat).

Dietitian (RD, LD)

Patients find that working with a registered, licensed dietitian (RD, LD, not a "nutritionist") is critical to finding and maintaining recovery. The dietitian works with patients to help reintroduce normal eating behaviors gradually and safely. The dietitian will provide guidance on appropriate intake, body cues, and expanding food choices (beyond the limited foods that most patients consider "safe"). She will also work with patients to identify potentially difficult situations involving eating and strengthen the problem solving skills needed to handle them.

Basic Guidelines

(while waiting for treatment team recommendations)

Restoring Nutrition

Goal is safe restoration of balanced nutrition in a way that is appropriate for your body.

Family Meals. Eat with the family together whenever possible. Keep conversation pleasant and non-confrontational. Provide same food for entire family; avoid “short order” special requests for individual family members.

Eat something. Strive for regular meals and snacks and consistent times, even if small portions are necessary until your own meal plan is in place.

Balanced plate. Aim for at least one protein, one carb, and one fat at each meal or snack.

Prevent / Minimize Purging Risk

Goal is to prevent or at least delay purging. “Buying time” may minimize risk to electrolyte balance (blood chemistry) if purging does occur.

Keep company after meals. Stay supervised for one hour after all meals (no bathroom privileges). Recommended: doing dishes together, working on homework, watch TV, play cards, etc.

Prevention over privacy. Keep bathroom door open if any risk for purging (vomiting).

Look ahead. Identify and avoid triggers when possible.

Distract and delay. If the urge to purge occurs, reach out to family or close friends to help you redirect your thoughts or at least buy time to make the outcome less severe. Use techniques to take your mind off the urge (reading, TV, etc.).

Prevent dental damage. If vomiting occurs, rinse mouth with sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) and water right away to neutralize the acid in the mouth. Do not brush teeth right away after purging; it may cause increased damage. When brushing, use fluoride containing toothpaste, rinse, or gels to reduce sensitivity of the teeth and build resistance to decay from acid.

Ask for help

Identify at least one person at home, at school, at work, etc. whom you can trust to be there for you when you are having a hard time. Develop a “code word” system that lets them know you need **non-judgmental** support. This doesn’t mean you have to talk about the problem at that time, just that you need them to be there to keep you occupied until the feeling passes.

Exercise Limits

Goal is to restore health and safety without jeopardizing recovery.

_____ Full restrictions: No exercise of any kind until cleared by _____.

_____ Partial restrictions: _____.

_____ No restrictions.

Recommended Websites for Eating Disorders

Stick with suggested reading. The resources listed below contain safe and appropriate comprehensive information, resources, and support. Please contact your doctor if you have questions about other eating disorder sites, books, or programs.

NationalEatingDisorders.org/Parent-Toolkit provides detailed information on eating disorders, treatment options and even how to work with insurance companies. The website also contains a wealth of information and support.

TheElisaProject.org The Elisa Project is a non-profit organization that promotes healthy living and awareness of the signs of disordered eating. The website includes a resource guide for eating disorder treatment options.

YoungWomensHealth.org The section on eating disorders provides information on eating disorders that is easy for teens (and their parents) to understand.

WARNING:

Reading about eating disorders can be hazardous to your daughter's health.

Proceed with caution. Many websites (e.g. pro-Ana, pro-Mia, tumblr, reddit) and books (e.g. personal memoirs, even stories of recovery) contain information about hiding or intensifying eating disorder thoughts and behaviors. We discourage participation in online forums, chat rooms, support sites, etc., for eating disorders as they may "trap" the reader (intentionally or unintentionally) into becoming worse.

Recommended Books for Eating Disorders

These books & more are available for sale at our office.

When Your Child has an Eating Disorder by Abigail Natenshon

General education about the causes and symptoms of eating disorders

Life Without Ed by Jenni Schaefer and Thom Rutledge

Advice for "breaking up" with your eating disorder and getting out from under its abusive "spell"

The Parent's Guide to Eating Disorders by Marcia Herrin and Matsumoto

Making sense of eating disorders and how parents can help

8 Keys to Recovery from an Eating Disorder by Carolyn Costin and Gwen Schubert Grabb

Specific strategies to overcome your eating disorder

Goodbye Ed, Hello Me by Jenni Schaefer

Finding yourself after leaving your eating disorder for good