

INDEPENDENT MENTAL HEALTHCARE PROVIDER



CARDINAL CLINIC



Eating Disorders

Information for Patients
and their Families



|| What are Eating Disorders?

Eating Disorders are illnesses where there are serious behavioural and psychological disturbances. There are three main types:

- Anorexia Nervosa
- Bulimia Nervosa
- Binge Eating Disorder

Anorexia Nervosa

Anorexia Nervosa is characterised by extreme thinness ($BMI < 17.5$), intense fear of gaining weight, disturbed perception of weight and shape and in women, loss of three consecutive menstrual periods.

There are two types of Anorexia:

- a restricting type in which weight loss is achieved by drastically cutting down the food intake and increased activity levels.
- a purging type where in addition, there is also binge/purge behaviour.

Bulimia Nervosa

Bulimia Nervosa is characterised by binge eating and some sort of compensatory behaviour, for example vomiting and use of laxatives, to prevent weight gain. Self worth and self perception of people with Bulimia is greatly influenced by their shape and size.

There are two types of Bulimia Nervosa; the purging type and the non-purging type where binge eating alternates with restrictive eating. Weight is generally in the normal range.

Binge Eating Disorder

Binge Eating Disorder is characterised by binge eating and feeling out of control when eating. There is no compensatory behaviour so these people gain weight and are often obese. Binge eating is done in secret and is accompanied by guilt and shame.

|| How common are they?

Eating Disorders are common in young people. Anorexia usually starts in early adolescence and children as young as seven could have the illness. Bulimia starts in late adolescence.

Even though the onset is early in life, people may come for treatment for the first time in their 30s and 40s. Eating Disorders occur across cultures and social classes. Women are ten times more likely to have an Eating Disorder than men.

|| **What causes them?**

There is no single cause that can explain Eating Disorders. Some people are more likely to become ill than others; genes, brain chemicals, psychological factors and socio-cultural factors can all play a part.

Dieting can precipitate an Eating Disorder. Although many people diet, people who are more likely to suffer from an Eating Disorder will react to dieting in a different way and may become out of control. In addition to dieting, there maybe a major life event or changes in their day to day life.

People suffering from Eating Disorders also experience changes in the way their appetite centre functions.

Size Zero culture and idealisation of thinness may also be contributing factors.

|| **Impact of Eating Disorders**

Eating Disorders significantly affect thinking, judgement and emotional stability. They also affect life activities like work, education and relationships. They are serious illnesses and some people die due to starvation or suicide.

Changes take place in the brain and some of these are irreversible. Starvation can cause bones to weaken which leads to Osteoporosis and fractures.

|| **Have I got an Eating Disorder?**

Eating Disorders can be secretive illnesses and very often sufferers do not acknowledge they have a problem.

The symptoms vary depending on the type of Eating Disorder. However, weight changes, abnormal eating behaviours (food restriction, binge eating, avoidance of social eating) purging, excessive exercise, altered fluid intake and disturbed body image are common.

Withdrawal from family and friends, loss of interest, impaired performance at work or school, obsessional behaviour, low mood, anxiety and sleep disturbances are also seen.

In the case of starvation, physical symptoms are very common; skin changes, sensitivity to cold, excessive bruising, fainting episodes, loss of menstrual periods, loss of libido and muscle weakness are seen.

In the case of Bulimia, bowel symptoms like nausea and constipation. Muscle weakness, tooth decay and changes to heart rhythm are sometimes seen.

|| **How do I get help?**

The first port of call is your GP. He/she will take a weight history and details of your current eating plan, exercise levels, binge/purge behaviour and look for medical complications of these behaviours. The GP will also assess if you suffer from any psychiatric symptoms and/or substance misuse issues. They will try and identify current stressors for you and your family.

The GP will carry out a physical examination which will include checking your height and weight, assessment of muscle strength, blood pressure, pulse and temperature. They will look for signs of dehydration.

Some routine blood tests may be carried out. This is to see if there are any physical complications related to your behaviour. People that purge are particularly prone to have problems related to their heart and muscles and these need to be checked carefully.

|| **Will I be referred to a specialist service?**

This will depend on your level of risk. If the risk is considered to be low, the GP might monitor and support you. They could advise how to make changes and refer you to a counsellor to help you with the psychological issues.

If your weight is low, with a BMI <15, or you have lost weight rapidly, or you are vomiting several times a day, or have suicidal behaviour, or medical complications which are dangerous, the GP will refer you to a local Mental Health Team for an assessment. They might refer you on to a specialist Eating Disorder Service if there is one in your area.

|| How can Cardinal Clinic help?

Cardinal Clinic Eating Disorders Service has been in operation for over 25 years and offers comprehensive treatment packages for people suffering with Anorexia Nervosa, Binge Eating Disorder, Night Eating Syndrome and mixed disorders.

The treatment is carried out by a multi-disciplinary team consisting of a Consultant Psychiatrist, Clinical Psychologists, Psychotherapists, Nutritional Therapist, Nurse Therapists, Family Therapist and a Physiotherapist. All are specialists in Eating Disorders. Dr Lalitha de Silva is the lead clinician.

The treatment is evidence based and the Clinic has a strong emphasis on psychological treatment and provides a wide range of individual, group and family treatments.

The Clinic accepts insured and self-funding patients. Usually a referral from the GP is required.

|| Assessment

The initial assessment will be carried out by Dr Lalitha de Silva. This will establish a diagnosis to identify the presence of other mental health problems, to assess the presence of medical complications and risk levels and also to assess the readiness to change.

Treatment options will be discussed with you and a full report will be sent to your GP with recommendations for treatment.

|| Treatment Options

■ Standard out-patient

This is appropriate for people of low risk and consists of regular 1:1 nutritional therapy and psychological input and if appropriate, family therapy. The care plan will be regularly reviewed by the lead clinician.

■ Enhanced out-patient

In addition to the above, this would include a half-day treatment package with two supervised meals and two groups. This option helps people who are not quite ready to enhance their motivation and engage in treatment.

■ Day-patient

This involves spending three whole days at the Clinic following the group therapy programme and also having individual appointments with the therapists. You would have all meals here. This is suitable for patients who are at moderate risk and who need close monitoring, meal support, supervision and enhanced support.

■ In-patient

This treatment option provides intensive treatment for patients at high risk and for patients who are stuck and not able to change in spite of out-patient/day-patient treatment.

The treatment would include assessment and treatment of medical complications, establishment of a normal eating pattern, a healthy weight and helping you work through the underlying psychological factors. The objectives are set at the beginning and reviewed regularly. There is intensive input from the multi-disciplinary team to help you achieve your goals.

■ Family support

Family support is provided to all families of patients who are treated at the Clinic, either on an individual or group basis. Family therapy is also available to those people who would benefit from it.

■ Contact us

If you would like to arrange an assessment, discuss the fee structure, arrange an appointment to look round or have any questions about any aspect of the service, please call us on **01753 869755** or email **info@cardinalclinic.co.uk**

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