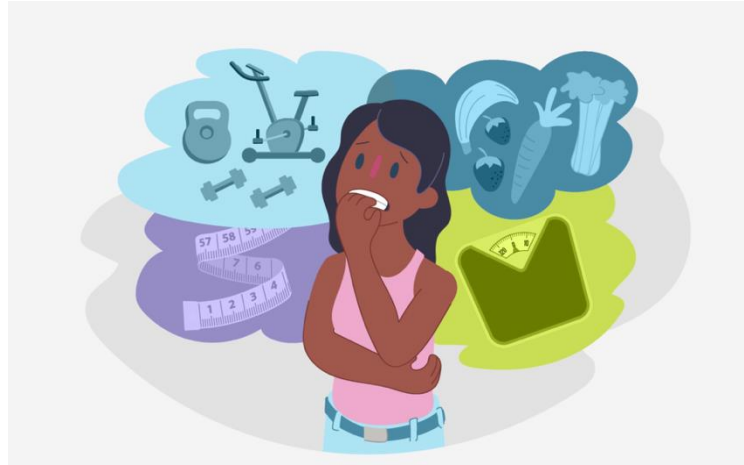


Eating Disorders & Disordered Eating

Overview

Eating disorders are mental health conditions related to **abnormal eating behaviours** and an unhealthy focus on eating, exercising, or body size and shape. These can seriously impact a person's physical and/or mental health and have lifelong impacts.



The Basics

- Eating disorders are different than disordered eating.
 - Disordered eating is an **irregular eating patterns** that can affect a person's wellbeing, it includes restrictive dieting, fasting, skipping meals, or emotional eating.
- **25% to 40%** of those in the 18- to 25-year-old age group may have **disordered eating**, which is a risk for developing eating disorders¹
- Both eating disorders and disorder eating may require treatment
- Signs and symptoms: ²
 - Restriction of food intake,
 - Fear of gaining weight,
 - Preoccupation with calories, food or weight,
 - Engaging in cycles of binge eating followed by compensatory behaviours,
 - Having repeating episodes of eating large amounts of food with no sense of control,
 - Excessive exercise,
 - Fatigue, dizziness,
 - Change in mood.
- You may see **changes** in the way **you feel, look, think or act** when your relationship with food is becoming unhealthy.
- **Food noise** is a persistent preoccupation with food and eating that can become intrusive and unpleasant. These incessant thoughts **may indicate a deeper problem**, like disordered eating or an eating disorder.

¹ Dr. James Stewart, quoted in “New Eating Disorders Clinic Opens for Western, Fanshawe Students,” Western Gazette, https://westerngazette.ca/news/campus/new-eating-disorders-clinic-opens-for-western-fanshawe-students/article_80c8b9d4-90ba-11ef-9740-df45fd4f6d3d.html

² Kids Helpline, “Eating Disorders – Signs and Symptoms,” Kids Helpline (Australia), accessed November 23, 2025, <https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/eating-disorders>

What can you do?

If you notice disordered eating behaviours here are some steps, you can take to support yourself even before seeking treatment. This is not one-size-fits-all; choose what works best for you and reach out to a professional if you need additional support or urgent help.

- Create a supportive environment free of triggers
- Develop a support system: reach out to family and friends, connect with support groups, share your experience and feelings
- Use self-directed resources like apps, educational videos, books to help learn about disordered eating and how to cope with it
- Set boundaries around diet talk, calories, weight
- Curate your social media: don't follow diet/fitness accounts that make you compare yourself
- Choose movement for wellbeing and enjoyment
- Intuitively eat

Looking for support?

Western University offers a medical clinic to all current students, offering [counselling & psychiatry services](#), [mental health supports](#) (individual therapy, crisis counselling, etc.) as well as [dietician services](#) that provide one-on-one nutrition counselling, meal planning and customized nutrition plans.

Western Health and Wellness: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/shs/index.html>

Mental health appointment: https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/book_an_appointment.html

What to expect at your first appointment with Western's Mental Health Team:

- Before the appointment: you will complete a brief questionnaire, provide emergency contact information and sign a confidentiality agreement.
- The initial appointment: will take about 50 minutes to an hour, to get know you and explore how you are doing and how things have been going in your life (academic life, eating and sleeping habits, and day-to-day life)

Additional Resources

The Harbour: <https://theharbour-london.ca/>

An **outpatient eating disorder clinic** supporting Western students, providing free, compassionate and evidence-based care **to those struggling with eating, body image and self-worth**. Accessing the Harbour starts with a referral by Student Health & Wellness Services.

- Individual and group therapies,
- Medication management and medical health monitoring
- Trauma counselling
- Substance abuse counselling
- Support from a multidisciplinary team including psychologists, dietitians, social worker

National Eating Disorder Information Centre: <https://nedic.ca/>

National resource for **eating disorder information and support**. Offers helpline services, live chat, educational resources and for professionals and public. Can find a provider near you that suits your needs.

Eating Disorders Ontario: <https://eatingdisordersontario.ca/>

Provides **training and resources for prevention and treatment of eating disorders** for health and mental-health practitioners.