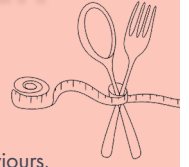


# SIX MHS TOOLKITS: EATING DISORDERS AWARENESS WEEK

26 FEBRUARY - 3 MARCH 2024



## WHAT IS AN EATING DISORDER?

Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses that involve severe disturbances to someone's eating behaviours, thoughts and emotions.

These behaviours may involve the person restricting their food intake, eating large quantities of food at once with a sense of having lost control ('bingeing'), compensating for food eaten through purging (trying to get rid of the food), fasting or excessive exercise, or a combination of these behaviours.

It is important to remember that, despite how it may seem, eating disorders are not about food. Instead, eating disorders often serve a function in someone's life. For example, they might be a coping mechanism, a way for the person to communicate a certain emotion, or a means of helping the person feel in control.

Eating disorders can be difficult to identify and often those who have them can appear healthy despite being unwell.

## WHAT IS ANOREXIA?

People with anorexia may eat very little food, or binge (eat lots of food all at once) and then exercise or make themselves sick so they don't gain weight. Someone with anorexia is likely to be a lower weight than expected for their age and height.

## WHAT IS BULIMIA?

People with bulimia may binge (eat lots of food at once) and then make themselves sick, exercise obsessively, or take laxatives because they feel guilty about what they've eaten, worry about their bingeing, or because their stomach is so painful. This is known as purging. Often someone with bulimia will stay a "normal" weight, which can make it even harder to spot.

## WHAT IS BINGE EATING DISORDER?

People with binge eating disorder may binge on a regular basis. Bingeing isn't just eating a bit more than usual – it might be days' worth of food in one sitting. Usually the food is what we might call "unhealthy". Binges will often be planned in advance and the food eaten in secret. Someone might feel "better" while bingeing, but afterwards they'll feel guilty and anxious about what has just happened. Their way to cope with this may be to plan their next binge.

## WHAT IS OSFED?

OSFED stands for "other specified feeding or eating disorder". If someone is diagnosed with OSFED, it means that their symptoms don't quite fit with what doctors expect of anorexia, bulimia, or binge eating disorder, though it is just as serious.

## WHAT IS ARFID?

ARFID stands for "avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder", where someone avoids certain foods or limits how much they eat. This can be for a number of reasons, for example, they might be sensitive to certain tastes or textures, have had a bad experience with food, or not be interested in eating due to other reasons.

Source: Beat: [beateatingdisorders.org.uk](https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk)

*If you have been affected by an eating disorder, and you would like some help, or someone to talk to, we are here for you. Just pick up the phone and give SIX MHS a call, or send us a message.*



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