



Eating Disorder Centre Cork

Some Signs and Symptoms of an Eating Disorder

Be aware of the following symptoms of your child or teen:

1. Often makes excuses to avoid family meals or stays away from social situations that involve eating.
2. Have rituals to make eating small amounts of food less obvious, such as cutting it into small portions and moving it around on the plate.
3. Have great fluctuations in eating—periods of excessive eating cycled with food restrictions.
4. Obsessively exercises without enjoyment regardless of bad weather, illness, or injury.
5. Signs of vomiting or laxative use; often disappears after eating to go to the bathroom.
6. Preoccupation with food and eating, and continued dissatisfaction with body shape.
7. Coldness, particularly in the hands and feet, and wearing layers of baggy clothing to hide body, even in warm weather.
8. Dental problems or calluses on the knuckles can be signs of vomiting.
9. Becomes disgusted with former favourite foods like meat, fats, and desserts, and only eats "safe" foods; or boasts about eating healthfully or as a vegetarian without consuming adequate fats, oils, whole grains, and dense fruits and vegetables (such as potatoes or avocados).
10. Frantic fear of weight gain, and repeated attempts to diet.
11. Simplistic, black and white thinking, such as "If I am thinner, I will feel better about myself," and envious of thin people in general.
12. Has trouble talking about feelings, especially anger, is moody, irritable, and withdrawn more than what is "normal" for a teen.
13. Self-harm behaviours, such as cutting, burning themselves, hair pulling, or engaging in risk taking. This may include a combination of eating disorders, substance abuse, alcohol binges, stealing or promiscuity.
14. Engages in secretive binge eating, hides food or wrappers, food disappears from the household without explanation, empty food containers in the garbage.
15. Girls *and* boys develop eating disorders and body image dissatisfaction, so watch for these signs in both sexes.

Reprinted (with kind permission) from *Eating Disorders Recovery Today*
Summer 2006 Volume 4, Number 3 ©2006 Gürze Books