



EATING DISORDERS

What are eating disorders?

Developing an eating disorder can be a sign that we have a complex relationship with food and our self-image. Eating disorders are a way of coping with feelings of unhappiness and depression. It can also be used as a means to gain some control over your emotions in a physical way, although eating disorders are actually very harmful physically and emotionally. Having an eating disorder is a sign that you need help in coping with things in life, and working through emotional difficulties.

Eating disorders are complex and not all signs and symptoms will apply to us. There are a number of different eating disorders and signs that we might be suffering from one or more of them:

Anorexia nervosa:

Physical symptoms:

- Severe weight loss
- Periods stopping (amenorrhoea)
- Hormonal changes
- Stomach pains
- Constipation
- Dizziness
- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Feeling cold constantly

Behaviours:

- Lying about having eaten meals
- Needing to control a situation
- Being in denial that there is an issue
- Wearing baggy clothes to disguise weight loss or perceived weight gain
- Fixation with exercising excessively
- Isolating ourselves and wanting to be alone

Emotional signs:

- Intense and irrational fear of gaining weight
- Having an obsession with dieting and portion control
- Having a distorted view of our shape and size, often not based in reality
- Experiencing guilt after eating
- Preoccupation with food
- Feeling guilty when we eat
- Depressive symptoms



Bulimia nervosa:

Physical symptoms:

- Suffering sore throats and swollen glands
- Experiencing issues with our teeth such as sensitivity and enamel damage
- Stomach pains
- Getting infections in our mouths
- Irregular periods
- Extremely dry skin

Behaviours:

- Eating large quantities of food in a single sitting
- Purging and vomiting after eating
- Secretive behaviour to cover our tracks
- Excessive abuse of laxatives

Emotional signs:

- Feeling guilty after eating
- Feeling intense shame and guilt for our actions
- Feeling out of control and powerless to stop
- Suffering serious mood swings



Binge Eating Disorder (BED)

Physical symptoms:

- Weight gain

Behaviours:

- Eating large quantities of food
- Being secretive about our eating
- Eating inappropriate and unhealthy foods

Emotional signs:

- Feeling guilty after eating
- Feeling ashamed and depressed
- Suffering intense mood swings
- Feeling powerless

We may also suffer from EDNOS – an eating disorder not otherwise specified. This means we may meet some but not all the diagnostic criteria for the above types of eating disorder, but do have disordered eating habits and emotional issues.

What causes eating disorders?

Eating disorders are complex mental health conditions that can arise from a combination of emotional, psychological, social, and cultural factors. They often develop as a way to cope with difficult feelings, trauma, low self-esteem, or a need for control. Societal pressures around body image, family dynamics, and personal experiences can also play a role. While the causes vary from person to person, what's common is the deep distress underlying the behaviour—and with compassionate support, healing is possible.

How can ListnHeal.Me help?

If you're struggling with an eating disorder, counselling can offer a gentle space to begin untangling what's really going on beneath the surface. It's not just about food or body image—it's often about how we've learned to cope, protect ourselves, or feel in control. Together, we'll explore the emotional and relational patterns that shape your experience, with care and without judgment. Using trauma-informed and body-based approaches, we'll work at your pace to help you feel safer in your body, more regulated in your emotions, and more connected to who you are beyond the struggle.