

Nutrition and Body Image



HANDOUT FOR EATING DISORDERS WORKSHOP

The eating disorders workshops are designed to help students to spot signs of eating disorders among their peers, to understand why some people develop eating disorders and to explore what we can do if someone we know has an eating disorder.

What are Eating Disorders?

- A group of conditions characterised by disturbances in eating, accompanied by physical, psychological and emotional effects
- Complex and sometimes life threatening
- A means of coping with feelings that are difficult to manage
- May be a symptom of underlying emotional distress or worry

The Main Types of Eating Disorders

- Anorexia Nervosa
- Bulimia Nervosa
- Binge eating disorder

What is Anorexia Nervosa?

People with Anorexia will have some or all of the following symptoms:

- Refusal to maintain body weight (less than 85% of that expected)
- Amenorrhoea (when a woman no longer has a period each month)
- Disturbance in how body weight or shape is experienced along with undue importance of shape /weight in self evaluation
- Intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat
- Restricting type or binge-eating/purging type eating

- Weight loss and weight preoccupation
- Dymorphophobia (fixation with an imaginary flaw) and mirror gazing
- Lanugo (development of a layer of hair on the body)
- Bizarre food and eating habits
- Over activity/obsession with exercise
- Blood tests may also show abnormalities

Binge Eating Disorder

- Recurrent episodes of binge eating
- Episodes are associated with 3 or more of the following:
 - rapid eating
 - eating until uncomfortably full
 - eating large amounts when not hungry
 - eating alone
 - feeling disgusted, depressed or guilty
- Marked distress regarding binge eating accompanied by low self esteem
- Binge eating occurs at least 2 days a week for 6 months
- No associated compensatory behaviour e.g. obsessive exercise
- Weight fluctuations-feeling of being out of control

Bulimia Nervosa

- Recurrent episodes of binge eating
- Recurrent compensatory behaviours e.g.
- Above behaviours occur at least twice a week for 3 months
- Self evaluation /self esteem influenced by body shape and weight
- Purging or non purging types

People at risk of Eating Disorders:

- Are likely to diet
- Have low self esteem
- Are over concern with body shape
- Are obsessed around food, weight and size
- May see their body as larger than it is i.e. distorted body image
- Think that thinness is a magical solution to problems
- Fear weight gain
- Have control issues
- Have difficulties expressing feelings or asserting themselves
- May experience depression, isolation or mood swings

What do we need to know about eating disorders?

- There is no single cause –these can be biological, psychological, familial or socio-cultural
- They may emerge as a response to trauma, critical comments about self image or stress
- They may emerge in adolescents when identity is an issue

- They can be associated with perfectionism, responsibility and high expectations of oneself or others

If you think someone close to you may have an eating disorder here are some useful tips on what to do:

Do

- Acknowledge your concern about their health to your friend or relative
- Encourage them to seek professional support or help
- Be patient and avoid conflict if possible
- Tell them about Body whys www.bodywhys.ie
As an information and support resource

Don't

- Ignore your concerns around their health
- 'Watch' or make comments on their specific eating habits
- Expect they will acknowledge they have a problem readily
- Emphasise the eating disorder as the only issue-acknowledge they may be distressed by other things

Treatment and Management Strategies for Eating Disorders – what's involved?

- Resistance to treatment is common. It may be hard to engage the person in treatment. This can take time
- Early detection and intervention leads to better outcomes for patients with eating disorders
- The person may need both medical and psychological help
- Nutritional needs will be assessed and education/advice will be provided
- Counselling is used to address underlying emotional issues
- A counsellor will try to help the patient to understand the factors motivating their attempts to control body weight and what is it connected to.
- Emotional, interpersonal issues and family issues will be examined
- Family support and education are part of most treatments
- The patient will be encouraged to relax their strict forms of dietary restriction
- The counsellor will work with the patient to challenge cultural messages "A thin body is central to personal happiness" and social norms where a fit and slender shape is ideal

Positive Eating

What is healthy eating?

Healthy eating is about what you eat. Not about what you don't. There are just 8 simple guidelines you need to follow if you want to achieve a healthy, balanced diet.

These are:

- **Enjoy** your food
- Eat a wide **variety** of foods
- Eat the right **amount** to be a healthy weight
- Eat plenty of foods rich in **starch** or **fibre**
- Eat plenty of **fruits** and **vegetables**
- Don't eat too many foods that contain a lot of **fat**
- Don't have **sugary** foods and drinks too often
- If you drink **alcohol** drink sensibly.

Enjoy Your Food

Healthy eating doesn't mean cutting out the everyday foods that taste nice. You may think that all your favourite meals are bad for you, but the truth is there is no such thing as a bad food. That said, there are a few small changes you can make in order to rebalance your diet towards a healthier way of eating.

These include simple measures like:

- Grilling or baking meat or fish where possible instead of frying - this applies to the sausages and bacon especially!
- Baking or boiling potatoes instead of frying or roasting
- Why not try stir frying meat or vegetables in the minimum of oil?
- If you're having Italian dishes, eat a spoonful more pasta and a spoonful less sauce
- Using reduced fat milk in sauces and low-fat fromage frais or plain yoghurt instead of cream.
- And always serve salads or vegetables with main meals

Eat a Variety of Foods

Our bodies need around 40 different nutrients to stay healthy. The principle behind this guideline is simple, and relatively unscientific - the more variety we have in our food the more likely we are to cover all the nutrients. That said, there are certain proportions in which different types of food should be eaten and this is what we mean by balance

The image shows the 'Food Guide pyramid' from the Department of Health and Children. There are five different food groups:

fruit and vegetables; breads, other cereals and potatoes; meat, fish and alternatives; milk and dairy foods; and foods containing fat and sugar, or 'extras'.



Breads, Cereals and Potatoes

These foods should form the main part of a meal or snack, and add up to about a third of all the food eaten in a day. Many people still believe that starchy foods such as breads and potatoes are fattening but that's not true. Bread, rice, pasta, breakfast cereals and potatoes and other starchy food supply essential nutrients such as vitamins, minerals and protein, as well as starch and fibre. They are filling, while being much lower in calories than foods containing a lot of fat. Moreover the fibre in starchy foods promotes satiety (a feeling of being full) as well as helping to regulate the digestive system. Nutritionists recommend that you eat 6-10 portions of these foods each day, depending on your body size and how active you are.

The Fruit and Vegetable Group

Fruit and vegetables contain many different vitamins and minerals that help maintain a healthy body. They also contain soluble fibre, which is the type of fibre that may reduce the amount of cholesterol in the blood. There is some evidence that eating plenty of fruit and vegetables may help reduce the incidence of many lifestyle diseases, like heart disease and cancer.

The 'take home' message is this - try to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day –

A banana on your toast or cereal, a glass of juice with breakfast, some salad vegetables on your sandwich, a piece of fruit for a snack, and two types of vegetables in your dinner and you have more than enough. If you can think about eating at least one fruit or vegetable at every meal, it's difficult to fail.

Dairy Foods

The third essential food group is the dairy group, the reason being that

this group of foods provide the richest source of calcium in our diet. It's not news to anybody now that calcium is essential for healthy bones. What you may not be aware of is the extent of the problem of osteoporosis. It now affects 1 in 4 women and one in 12 men, according to the World Health Organisation. This means that it is still vital to maintain a good intake of dairy products; three to four portions of dairy foods is about right. But choose the lower fat versions, skimmed or semi-skimmed milk instead of whole milk, low fat yoghurt and cheese and use fromage frais instead of cream in recipes where possible. The low fat dairy foods provide just as much calcium, protein and B vitamins. Dieters and people with eating disorders are particularly vulnerable to poor bone health in the future.

Meat, Fish and Alternatives

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, beans, peas and lentils are all included in this group. This group is important because of the protein it provides. Protein is essential for healthy growth in children, and for maintenance of muscle mass and repair of body tissues in adults. These foods also provide many vitamins and minerals. Iron is particularly important since red meat is the richest available source, and because 50% of 18-50 year old women in Ireland have a low iron intake according to the North South Food Consumption Survey.

However, if you choose not to eat meat, pulses such as beans, peas and lentils also contain some iron. The thing to remember for this group is that you don't need large amounts and that you should go easier on the fattier meat, like sausages and bacon, as well as choosing leaner cuts and lean mince. Grilling or baking meat is healthier than frying or roasting.

Sweet and Fatty Foods

Are those 'extras' really allowed on a healthy diet?!

While this group will not add much more than sugar and fat to your diet in terms of nutrition, what it does add is some extra choice and interest. Some foods containing fats like margarines, reduced fat spreads and cooking oils will be eaten most days, but try to use small amounts.

Other foods containing fat, like chocolate cakes and pastries, can be included in a healthy diet provided they are not eaten in large portions or too often. One small treat per day is fine, as long as the rest of your diet is made up of a variety of healthy foods. If you have a sweet tooth, sugary foods like sweets or fizzy drinks should be eaten at meal times because that reduces the risk of tooth decay.

Here's an example of a healthy daily menu

Breakfast

Orange Juice
Bran flakes with chopped banana and low fat milk
One cup of coffee

Mid morning snack

Fruit scone and low fat spread
Cup of tea

Lunch

Tuna salad roll
Piece of fruit

Mid afternoon snack

2 finger kitkat

Dinner

Spaghetti Bolognese with a little cheese on top
Yoghurt for dessert

What is a healthy body weight?

Nutritionists use a ratio of weight for height to see if someone is a healthy weight. This is called the body mass index or BMI for short. You calculate it as follows:

Weight (kg)

Height ² (m)

You will also find a handy online tool at <http://www.eufic.org> that will calculate this for you.

A normal body weight is between 18.5 and 25.0, overweight is between 25 and 30 and obesity is defined as having a BMI over 30. Being overweight or obese is considered unhealthy, but so is being underweight, or having a BMI under 18.5. Models often have BMIs in the region of 16-18 and do not represent images of normal or healthy body weights.

How much can you eat each day?

A healthy, moderately active woman will use up about 2000 calories each day. Around 1200 – 1400 calories will be used up by the body, just to keep things ticking over. In other words, even if you didn't get out of bed, you would still need this many calories to keep your body going.

A man uses up on average 2500 calories each day.

Eating too little – what are the effects?

If you eat too little you will not only lose fat, you will also start to lose muscle. Muscle is what burns up calories in the body, so the less muscle you have the less calories you will be able to eat and still maintain your body weight. What this actually means, is that you could put yourself at risk of gaining weight in the long term.

Apart from that, your body may be lacking in essential vitamins and minerals. This can affect your skin and hair, leave you tired and lethargic, cause nutritional deficiency diseases, and in particular can harm your bone health and leave you at risk of osteoporosis.

Isn't it good to be slim?

Having a healthy BMI between 18.5 and 25.0 is healthy and could prevent disease like diabetes, heart disease and cancer in the long term. However, there is a big difference between being a healthy weight and being underweight. Being underweight has many detrimental effects.

Resources

"Anorexia Nervosa a survival guide for families friends and sufferers"
Janet Treasure (Routledge)

" Getting Better Bit(e) by Bit(e)" Ulrike Schmidt and Janet Treasure (LEA publications)

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