



SWIM CONFIDENT

Intervening Early: *Disordered Eating*

Noticing the Signs

This is not an extensive list. Some signs some might not develop into disordered eating but they are worth noticing.

- New focus on "eating healthy"
- New interest in nutrition or food-related social media.
- Negative body commentary
- Frequent colds or illnesses
- Changes in clothing (I.e. wearing baggier clothing all of a sudden)
- Rigid training patterns (no space for flexibility)
- Pushing through injury, illness or not coping with regular daily activities
- Withdrawal from social events

Earlier Signs

- Loss of weight
- Dieting
- Food rules
- Cutting out carbohydrates or eliminating "sugar"
- Skipping meals
- Avoiding eating socially
- Menstrual or testosterone dysfunction
- Difficulty concentrating or appearing withdrawn
- Dizziness, fainting, low blood sugar
- Feeling cold all the time
- Abnormal blood test results (i.e. low iron)

Later Signs

What to Do when you notice some of the earlier signs ...

- Provide a supportive environment that discourages dieting or focusing on physical appearance.
- Provide safe spaces for conversations and checking in with mental and physical well-being.
- Engage with active listening and try to provide a space where someone might feel safe opening up with no judgement if they're struggling.
- If the person is under the age of 18 have a discussion with the parents or guardian and communicate clearly what you've noticed and your concern. If the person is over 18, discuss your concerns with them only.



If you're noticing:
 (a) they need support or
 (b) if there are multiple early signs or
 (c) there are some later signs developing

Recommend Seeking Help

1. Start by recommending they seek professional and specialist eating disorder support.
2. Start with a good GP who they trust or who will spend some additional time exploring and understanding mental illness.
3. Encourage them to build a treatment team around them with an eating disorder dietitian and psychologist.
4. If they are resistant to seeking specific eating disorder support, suggest a sports psychologist or sports dietitian for "fuelling" and "performance" discussions which can then move towards eating disorder assessment.

Scan the QR code to find certified eating disorder professionals in Australia



If in doubt, head to Butterfly.org.au for support and resources

There's no such thing as 'not sick enough' for support