

# Eating Disorders



## What are eating disorders?

Some children may have difficulties with feeding from birth - difficulties taking milk, allergies or reflux, for example. These may be a result of physical needs and most can be addressed with changes to milk, advice and minor medical procedures. Some issues may be longer term and some may be life-long: some may require medical procedures or ongoing medical support. Some children do not develop eating issues until they are older. For some, moving onto solid foods is when it shows and again it often a physical need that is seen. As children grow they take more control of their eating and some disorders are seen during this stage - this could include what children choose to eat, how they choose to eat and when they choose not to eat. Sometimes the eating is part of a wider need that you can see through food and sometimes its only food related. It can be a physical need or an emotional mental health need.

## How might I know if my child has a eating disorder?

We all like different tastes, textures, how food looks on the plate and may have times when we only crave certain foods and really dislike others. Providing a child is having a balanced diet and 'thrives' (grows well and is healthy) then this is all considered normal. Some tastes change with age and some children like food which is familiar or comforting. Where food choices mean that they are not getting enough to keep them healthy or getting enough balanced food inside them, then this may be the sign that you need professional advice. Cravings, including for non-food substances, can be triggered by certain medical conditions and should not be overlooked. Avoidance of certain foods may also be a result of other medical needs. Overeating, binge eating or secret eating can make a child unhealthy and this shouldn't be overlooked either. What children drink is important too- a body needs sufficient liquid intake to stay healthy and dehydration should also be a sign that you need help.

## Who can help?

You should share your concerns with your GP / Paediatrician - they can advise on whether there is a health risk from your child's eating and drinking patterns and, if needed, refer you on.

If your child is a young adult, then ideally they talk to their GP and get any help needed. If this is an issue you can talk to your own GP and seek advice.

Where children like to chew there are safe solutions to satisfy this need and Fledglings (<https://www.fledglings.org.uk/>) have a range of products which may help.

If your child's eating and drinking suddenly stops or become very restricted or becomes unwell please seek immediately medical advice from the GP or NHS 111 to ensure they are safe and well.

## Where to find out more on website:

[www.pinpoint-cambs.org.uk](http://www.pinpoint-cambs.org.uk) and look under Useful Information