

EATING DISORDERS

Have the 2nd highest death rate among all mental health conditions

Eating disorders (EDs) are serious mental illnesses.^{1,2} They involve problems with eating that affect how much or how well someone takes in food, which can seriously harm a person's physical, emotional, and social health. EDs have the second-highest death rate among all mental health conditions, with only opioid use disorder being higher. 1,2 About 8% of people have an ED, and nearly 30% of Canadian youth engage in disordered eating. 4 These disorders can also lead to other mental health problems, higher healthcare costs, and stress on caregivers. 5 Many people believe EDs only affect adolescent girls, but in reality, they can affect anyone, including boys, men, and women in middle age. 6.7 If you are in Alberta and are struggling with an ED, you can get meaningful help today. a,b

A review of seven countries found that people with EDs often go more than two years without treatment, mainly because they do not seek treatment themselves.⁸ However, preventing and treating EDs early can make a huge difference for those affected and their families.^{1,4} This Mental Health and Addiction Brief highlights that family members and supporters can help reduce the severity of EDs by creating a positive environment, identifying EDs early, and encouraging access to support. 8 Other helpful factors to ED remission and recovery include fewer service delays, entering treatment at a younger age, and shorter treatment lengths.^{1,4,8} Early identification and treatment of EDs can lead to sustained recovery. Start your recovery journey today.

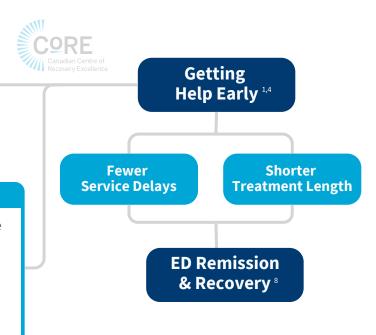
Preventing EDs

- Use neutral language about food, avoiding labels like "junk" or "healthy"
- Actively address weight-based bullying and teasing
- Promote body positivity and self-esteem
- Allow individuals enough time to eat their meals

Identifying EDs

- Changes in eating behaviour or food preference
- Increased exercise
- Anxiety, social withdrawal, body dissatisfaction, and mood changes
- Binge eating, vomiting or laxative use*
- Rapid weight changes, compulsive exercise*
- Fainting, feeling cold, or jaw swelling*

*professional support recommended



^{1.} Eating Disorder Awareness for School Providers [Zoom]. Eating Disorder Center of Excellence; 2025 July 24 [cited 2025 Aug 1].

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^{2.} https://doi.org/10.1186/s40337-025-01343-6

^{2.} https://www.psychiatryonline.org/doi/book/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425787
4. https://eatingdisordersontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/EDO-P-2023-24-report-Final.pdf

^{5.} https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.24519 6. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-080921-074125

^{7.} https://doi.org/10.1007/s11920-019-1057-5

^{8.} https://doi.org/10.1002/erv.2745

a. Mental Health Helpline at 1-877-303-2642 or the National Eating Disorder Information Center (NEDIC) at 1-866-633-4220 b. Eating Disorder Support Network for Alberta (EDSNA) supports referrals to two ED programs and offers non-clinical support groups in-person and online, visit: https://edsna.ca/find-support/