

Eating Disorder Information

Dear Parent and Guardians:

Eating disorders are behaviors that can lead to serious health problems. These behaviors can begin as a child, and affect both girls and boys. When discovered early, eating disorders are treatable. In 2013, Virginia passed a law requiring every school system provide information to parents annually about eating disorders. This information is given to parents of students in the fifth through twelfth grades.

It is important to note that eating disorders are not identified based on weight changes as much as behaviors and attitudes. Signs of eating disorders may differ between males and females and in different age groups. Often, a young person may not recognize the signs that they might have an eating disorder. Parents/guardians and family members are in a position to notice behaviors that cause concern. It is important that a child with an eating disorder be treated early by someone who understands this type of care.

After reviewing the information on the back of this letter, if you think your child may be showing signs of a possible eating disorder, please contact your doctor, school nurse, or one of the resources listed below.

Academy for Eating Disorders (AED)

- <https://www.aedweb.org/>
- Families Empowered and Supporting Treatment of Eating Disorders (F.E.A.S.T.) www.feast-ed.org
- National Eating Disorders Association www.nationaleatingdisorders.org Toll free, confidential Helpline, 1-800-931-2237

Additional resources may be found at:

- Virginia Department of Education http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/health_medical/index.shtml, under the section titled, Eating Disorders

Sincerely,

Carlyn Floyd, Ed.D.

Principal

What Are Eating Disorders?

Eating disorders are conditions that can have a serious effect on health. They are serious behaviors that affect every aspect of the child's life. Eating disorders may be identified based on weight changes, but also based on behaviors and attitudes. Be alert for any of these signs in your child.

Key things to look for around food:

- Eating a lot of food that seems out of control (large amounts of food may disappear, you find a lot of empty wrappers hidden)
- Develops food rules—may eat only a particular food or food group, cuts food into very small pieces, or spreads food out on the plate
- Talks a lot about, or focuses often, on weight, food, calories, fat grams, and dieting
- Often says that they are not hungry
- Skips meals or takes small portions of food at regular meals
- Cooks meals or treats for others but won't eat them
- Avoids mealtimes or situations involving food
- Goes to the bathroom after meals often
- Uses a lot of mouthwash, mints, and/or gum
- Starts cutting out foods that he or she used to enjoy

Key things to look for around activity:

- Exercises all the time, more than what is healthy or recommended – despite weather, lack of energy, illness, or injury
- Stops doing their regular activities, spends more time alone (can be spending more time exercising)

Physical Risk Factors:

- Feels cold all the time or complains of being tired all the time. Likely to become more irritable and/or nervous.
- Any vomiting after eating (or see signs in the bathroom of vomiting – smell, clogged shower drain)
- Any use of laxatives or diuretics (or you find empty packages)

Other Risk Factors:

- Believes that they are too big or too fat (regardless of reality)
- Asks often to be reassured about how they look
- Stops hanging out with their friends
- Not able to talk about how they are feeling
- Reports others are newly judgmental or “not connecting”

If Your Child Shows Signs of a Possible Eating Disorder

Seek help from your doctor as soon as possible; a child with an eating disorder should be seen by someone who understands the treatment of eating disorders. The earlier a person with an eating disorder seeks treatment, the greater the likelihood of physical and emotional recovery.