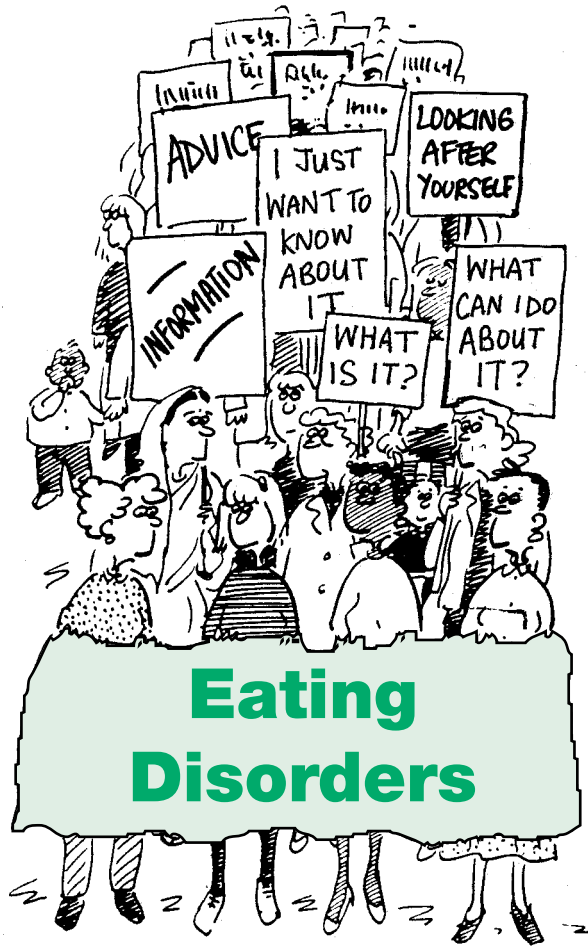




Women in Usdaw

Talking about ...



Usdaw

Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers

This leaflet explains the most common forms of eating disorders, highlights the signs and symptoms to be aware of and gives some practical advice on how to approach someone you suspect of suffering from an eating disorder.

Eating is influenced by many factors, including appetite, food availability, family, peer and cultural practices.

Dieting to a body weight lower than needed for health is heavily promoted by current fashion trends, sales campaigns for special foods, and in some activities and professions.

An increasing number of women and men are affected by eating disorders.

What is an eating disorder?

- Eating disorders are not a problem with food. They are in fact only a symptom of underlying problems.
- Eating disorders develop as outward signs of inner emotional or psychological distress or problems. They become the way that people cope with difficulties in their life.
- With all eating disorders, weight is the focus of life. By focusing on food, weight and calories, a person is able to block out or numb painful feelings and emotions. Some use food as a way to comfort themselves.
- Eating disorders are complex illnesses where both the disturbed eating pattern as well as psychological aspects need to be treated.
- Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa are two of the most common eating disorders.

What is Anorexia Nervosa?

- Literally, Anorexia Nervosa means 'loss of appetite for nervous reasons'. A person suffering from anorexia has in fact lost the ability to allow themselves to satisfy their appetite.
- Anorexics restrict the amount they eat and drink, sometimes to a dangerous level.
- Anorexics consider themselves to be fat, no matter what their actual weight is.
- Anorexics focus on food in an attempt to cope with life, rather than to starve to death. It is a way of demonstrating that they are in control of their body weight and shape.
- Anorexics usually deny that anything is wrong.

Signs and symptoms of Anorexia

Physical

- Extreme weight loss
- Swollen stomach, face and ankles
- Dry, rough, discoloured skin

Psychological

- Changes in personality and mood swings
- Denial of the existence of a problem
- Intense fear of gaining weight, even within the normal weight range according to height.

Behavioural

- Rituals attached to eating, such as cutting food into tiny pieces
- Restlessness and hyperactivity
- Wearing big baggy clothes

What is Bulimia Nervosa?

- Literally, the term bulimia nervosa means 'the hunger of an ox'. The hunger, however, is an emotional need that cannot be satisfied by food alone.
- Bulimia is characterised by a cycle of binge eating followed by purging to try and rid the body of unwanted calories. This is done by vomiting or taking laxatives (or both) or by working off calories with exercise.
- As with anorexia, people who develop bulimia rely on the control of food and eating as a way of coping with emotional difficulties in their life.
- Bulimia is more difficult to detect than anorexia as the person often will not lose weight so dramatically.
- Unlike anorexics, bulimics do realise they have a problem and are more likely to seek help.

Signs and symptoms of Bulimia

Physical

- Frequent weight changes
- Lethargy and tiredness
- Swollen salivary glands making the face more round

Psychological

- Emotional behaviour and mood swings
- Anxiety and depression, low self esteem, shame and guilt
- An obsession with food

Behavioural

- Bingeing and vomiting
- Excessive exercise
- Secrecy and reluctance to socialise

Approaching someone with an eating disorder

It is important to remember that when you first approach the person you suspect has an eating disorder, they may react with anger or they may deny that anything is wrong.

Do not push the issue. Just let them know that you will always be there for them if they need to talk.

No matter how much you want to help them, remember that only they can make the decision to get help.

Do's and don'ts

Do:

- Avoid talking about food and weight, as these are not the real issues
- Encourage them to seek help
- Be patient, recovery takes time
- Listen to them, do not be quick to give opinions and advice

Don't

- Try to force them to eat
- Comment on their weight or appearance
- Blame the individual and do not get angry with them
- Try to take on the role of a therapist

For further information

The following organisation offers a wide range of information on eating disorders:

The Eating Disorders Association
103 Prince of Wales Road
Norwich NR1 1DW
Tel: 0845 634 1414
www.edauk.com

Contacts

Listed below are the contact names and addresses of union officials who co-ordinate the work of your Women in Usdaw Committees.

South Wales and Western Division

Christine Richardson, Usdaw,
5 Mansel Street, Swansea SA1 5SF
Tel: 01792 655121

Eastern Division

Christine Henry, Usdaw, The Anderson Centre
6 Olding Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 3TA
Tel: 01284 775700

Midlands Division

Diane Gregory, Usdaw, 3c Market Place
Kegworth, Derby DE74 2EE
Tel: 01509 686900

North Eastern Division

Jayne Holland, Usdaw, 198 Portland Road
Shieldfield, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1DJ
Tel: 0191-232 0531

Scottish Division

Michala Lafferty, Usdaw, 39 York Place
Edinburgh EH1 3HP
Tel: 0131-556 5242

Southern Division

Susan Merrell, Usdaw, Meldrum House
89-91 Middleton Road, Morden, Surrey SM4 6RF
Tel: 020-8687 5950

North West Division

Hilary Ashton, Usdaw, First Floor
2 Montrose Business Park, Binns Road
Liverpool L7 9NE
Tel: 0151-252 6010

To find out more about the work of Women in Usdaw or about joining Usdaw contact:

The Women and Equalities Officer
Usdaw, 188 Wilmslow Road
Manchester M14 6LJ
Tel: 0161-224 2804

or visit our web site

www.usdaw.org.uk