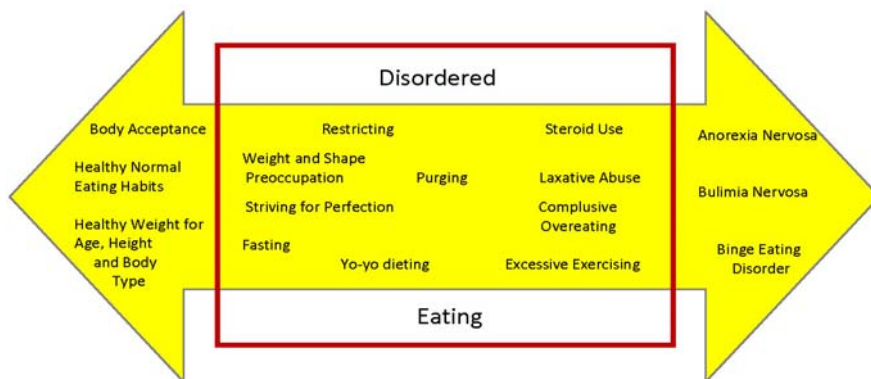


Provincial Eating Disorder Awareness Week

February 5th to 11th 2012 is Provincial Eating Disorder Awareness Week (PEDAW). Help tackle disordered eating by raising your awareness about this important issue.

What is Disordered Eating?

Disordered eating refers to the wide range of abnormal behaviours, thoughts and feelings associated with eating and body image. It includes but is not limited to dieting, over-exercising, abusing laxatives, diuretics or steroids, binge eating, compulsively weighing oneself, and having feelings of shame and disgust towards one's body. These symptoms may not be extreme or frequent enough to classify as a clinical eating disorder (i.e., anorexia, bulimia, or binge eating disorder), but this does not make disordered eating any less important. Individuals engage in disordered eating as a means to cope with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and stress. It is important to approach disordered eating from a place of compassion and seriousness.



Who does it affect? Disordered eating does not discriminate. It is a major mental health issue that affects both females and males, preschool-aged children through to the elderly, and individuals of all other diverse backgrounds.

The numbers!

Research tells us that youth in secondary school are especially vulnerable:

- Among secondary school students, 30% of girls and 25% of boys report teasing about their bodies at school or in the home. 50% of girls and 33% of boys have engaged in some sort of unhealthy weight control behaviour by the time they begin high school.
- 4% of boys in grades 9 and 10 use anabolic steroids to counter poor body image.
- 98% of females are unhappy with their bodies.
- For references and to learn about other studies please visit www.nedic.ca.

Risk factors

Certain genetic and social factors put children and youth at greater risk for engaging in disordered eating. These include genetic predispositions; having a family member who struggles with disordered eating, a history of trauma (i.e. abuse, bullying), mental illness, personality factors such as perfectionism or impulsivity, unhealthy attachment to caregivers, feeling silenced or unheard, cultural pressures to look a certain way, shame or embarrassment during puberty, having peers who engage in disordered eating, and internalizing unhealthy family and societal values around food, weight and body shape.



Tips for preventing disordered eating:

- Allow your child to express feelings of sadness, anger and shame without judgment or punishment.
- Focus encouraging comments on your child's personality and individuality, as opposed to their appearance.
- Reflect on your child's inner progress.
- Conceptualize the body as a gift - especially for those who are able-bodied. Practice gratefulness and body acceptance.
- Refrain from judging your body and eating habits in front of your child. Instead, model a healthy and balanced relationship to food and exercise.
- Reflect on whether you may be sending your child harmful weight-biased messages (do you believe that people who look a certain way are "better" than others?).
- Teach your child how to think critically about the media and its unhealthy messages.
- Learn about and discuss the dangers of disordered eating.

How parents can help

Parents play an integral role in preventing and helping their children recover from disorder eating.



What to do if your child is struggling:

Seek help before it worsens. Contact Vancouver Coastal Health's Be Real Eating Disorders Clinic for medical, nutritional and psychological support: (604) 992-4814.

Interested in learning more? Check out these wonderful Canadian resources:

Jessie's Legacy: www.familyservices.bc.ca/professionals-a-educators/jessies-legacy

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre: www.keltyeatingdisorders.ca

National Eating Disorder Information Centre: www.nedic.ca

Chicken Pox Vaccination Update!

- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends children 12 years and younger to receive two doses of Chicken Pox (Varicella) vaccine.
- The provincial government is now offering a **free second dose** of Chicken Pox vaccine to **children 4-6 years** of age.
- There is no free catch-up program for children 7 and older.

For more information please call the On-Call Nurse for the Child & Youth Team at 604-983-6714 or visit www.immunizebc.ca

