

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, AND YOUTH

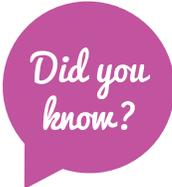
YOUNG MEN & DISORDERED EATING

Disordered eating is often seen as a problem that affects women, girls, and people who identify as female. But the truth is that men and boys are just as vulnerable to pressure from the media and society to have “perfect” bodies.

Research shows that 10% of people living with an eating disorder are men and boys. They may struggle with emotional issues, such as difficulty controlling their impulses, feeling anxious, and avoiding their feelings. They may feel pressure from other guys and social media to lose fat or gain muscle.

Young men are less likely than young women to discuss changes to their bodies with friends and family. If they have difficulty discussing their bodies, it can leave them unprepared for Western male body ideals that promote highly muscled, low-fat bodies. Anxieties about being “too small” may lead them to turn to steroids or other dangerous drugs to build muscle mass.

We often overlook the ways media and advertising make men feel insecure about their bodies. Like women’s bodies, men’s bodies can be digitally manipulated to make them look more thinner or muscular. Similarly, commercials for typically “men’s” products often show tall, lean, muscular men, even when the product has nothing to do with muscles or fitness.



MEN’S DISORDERED EATING MORE OFTEN INVOLVES OVER-EXERCISING, BINGING, AND PURGING INSTEAD OF RESTRICTING FOOD INTAKE.

For more info:
embodybc.com
heretohelp.ca

Embody | A provincial program of Family Services of the North Shore
Kindness for every body

In partnership with
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Mental health and substance use information you can trust

YOUNG MEN & DISORDERED EATING



Did you know?

FOR SOME MEN AND BOYS, STRUGGLES WITH PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUAL IDENTITY CAN LEAD TO LOW SELF-ESTEEM, ANXIETY, AND DISORDERED EATING BEHAVIOURS

WARNING SIGNS

No one is immune from disordered eating. Boys and men are just as vulnerable as girls and women. Know the signs:

- Dieting
- Over-exercising
- Purging
- Binging
- Social withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Irritability
- Preoccupation with body shape, weight, and physique

How do I know if I'm at risk?

- 1 You were teased about your body shape, weight, or appearance as a child.
- 2 You are dieting, binging, purging, overexercising, and/or misusing supplements.
- 3 You participate in a sport in which competition is based on weight classes (like boxing or wrestling) or a particular body type is needed in order to be competitive. Runners, swimmers, figure skaters, gymnasts, and jockeys are at higher risk of anorexia and bulimia, while weightlifters often focus on becoming more muscular.
- 4 You have considered using steroids or dietary supplements to control weight or gain muscle.
- 5 You have a job or profession that values appearance and a certain type of physique, such as modelling or acting.
- 6 You have a family history of certain diseases (such as diabetes or heart disease) that you are trying to avoid through diet and exercise.
- 7 You have survived a traumatic event such as an accident, death of a loved one, or abuse—physical, emotional, or sexual.

How to talk to my youth about my concerns

Be informed about youth growth and development and be prepared to share this information in order to encourage an open and reciprocal conversation with your youth.

Approach them with concern and without judgment. Let them know that you've noticed that they seem to be struggling with some feelings around food, eating, or body image.

Don't comment on their body shape, size, weight, or appearance.

Emphasize that you're there for them and want to understand what they're going through so you can better support them and their well-being.

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Embody (formerly Jessie's Legacy) equips BC parents and professionals with trusted resources to support young people before they develop an eating disorder. Embody is a provincial program of Family Services of the North Shore, and one of the seven BC Partners for Mental Health and Substance Use Information.