Eating Disorders

Safety, Crisis Readiness and Other Essential Information for Caregivers

Are you a caregiver to an individual with an Eating Disorder (ED), or concerned that an individual may have an Eating Disorder?

As a caregiver, you may not know that Eating Disorders have the 2nd highest mortality rate of any mental illness, estimated at **10 -15%**, (second only to opioid overdose).

Other known risks with an ED can include self-harm, heart failure, suicidal behaviours and other medical and mental health-related symptoms.

Use this resource to find information and suggestions on what to do if:

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The individual with an ED is in a crisis situation and you are unsure what to do

You notice behaviours in the individual that concern you or you suspect an ED

You are seeking further information on topics related to EDs such as home environment safety, seeking medical help, or wanting to learn more about Eating Disorders and helping adults, youth, and children

This information is a suggested resource only. NIED does not offer clinical care, clinical services or medical advice.

I have an emergency situation / immediate crisis. What should I do?

YES

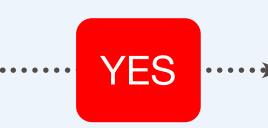
Does the individual have a way to do immediate harm to themselves or others?

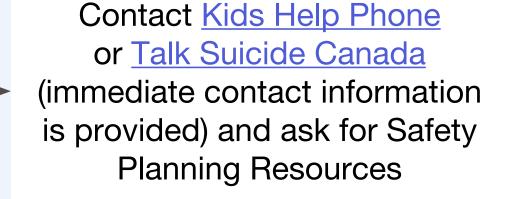
OR

Is the individual experiencing any of the following symptoms: fainting, irregular heartbeat, chest pain, or expressing suicidal intent?

NO

Is the individual experiencing a mental health crisis and you need support? (e.g., individual may be spiralling, feeling hopeless, helpless or apathetic)





Take the individual to the

nearest emergency room if

close by. (By you, a family

member or close friend)

Call 911

OR

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Calling 911	 Tell the 911 dispatcher the individual is having a physical and mental health crisis. Include information about any physical symptoms. Inform the dispatcher that the individual has an ED and could be at risk of a heart attack. If paramedics are not trained or educated in Eating Disorders, they may not be aware of this danger. Share as much information as you can to help responders understand the nature of the crisis (e.g., if a weapon is involved or not). Ask if there is a Mobile Mental Health Crisis Team or if responders trained in mental health crisis intervention are available to be sent. Not all responders have this training and could possibly act in ways perceived as uninformed. There is always a possibility of police being dispatched when you contact 911 even if only requesting an ambulance (especially when mental health is involved). Ask them not to use sirens and lights wher approaching your location.
When the 911 responder arrives	 Provide a summary of the situation and inform them of any changes that have occurred since you called. Notify them if a weapon is involved. State that the individual is in distress. If they are not acting violently, communicate this clearly. Step away to let the responders attend to the individual. While you may not be a medical professional, remain present to assist if called upon or to advocate for the individual.
What to expect at the hospital	 If the patient arrives with 911 services, a responder or officer may stay with the person until they are seen. If the patient arrives on their own (no 911), they will need to wait

- Hospital staff will determine the urgency of the situation, known as "triaging". **The wait time will depend** on the triage decision.
- The caregiver/family/friend **may or may not** be allowed to accompany the patient once they are in medical treatment
- A doctor with psychiatric experience should see the patient for further assessment.
- As a caregiver, you may be able to provide helpful background information (e.g., list of medications, medical history, allergies) to pass on to the treatment team.
- Assessment and follow-up of the patient may take several hours (e.g., on-call psychiatrist or other medical consults).

Some symptoms of an Eating Disorder may not be immediate emergencies but include behaviours that can be concerning. Read through the next section to recognize these behaviours, suggested action and where to go for information.

until instructed by the hospital.

*Suggested actions only. At any point in a crisis, if you feel you must call 911, do so immediately. I don't have an immediate emergency, but I notice behaviours of an individual that concern me. What can I do?

Does the behaviour include thinking or talking about suicide (suicidal ideation) or a suicide plan?





Intervene or de-escalate (take action, prevent or calm worsening behaviour)

Resources:

ED and Suicide: 6 Signs of Suicidal Thinking When a Family Member is Thinking About Suicide Talk Suicide Crisis Service – Someone You Know is Thinking About Suicide Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention – I am Concerned About Someone

Does the behaviour include a pattern of physical confrontation and/or defensive behaviour?

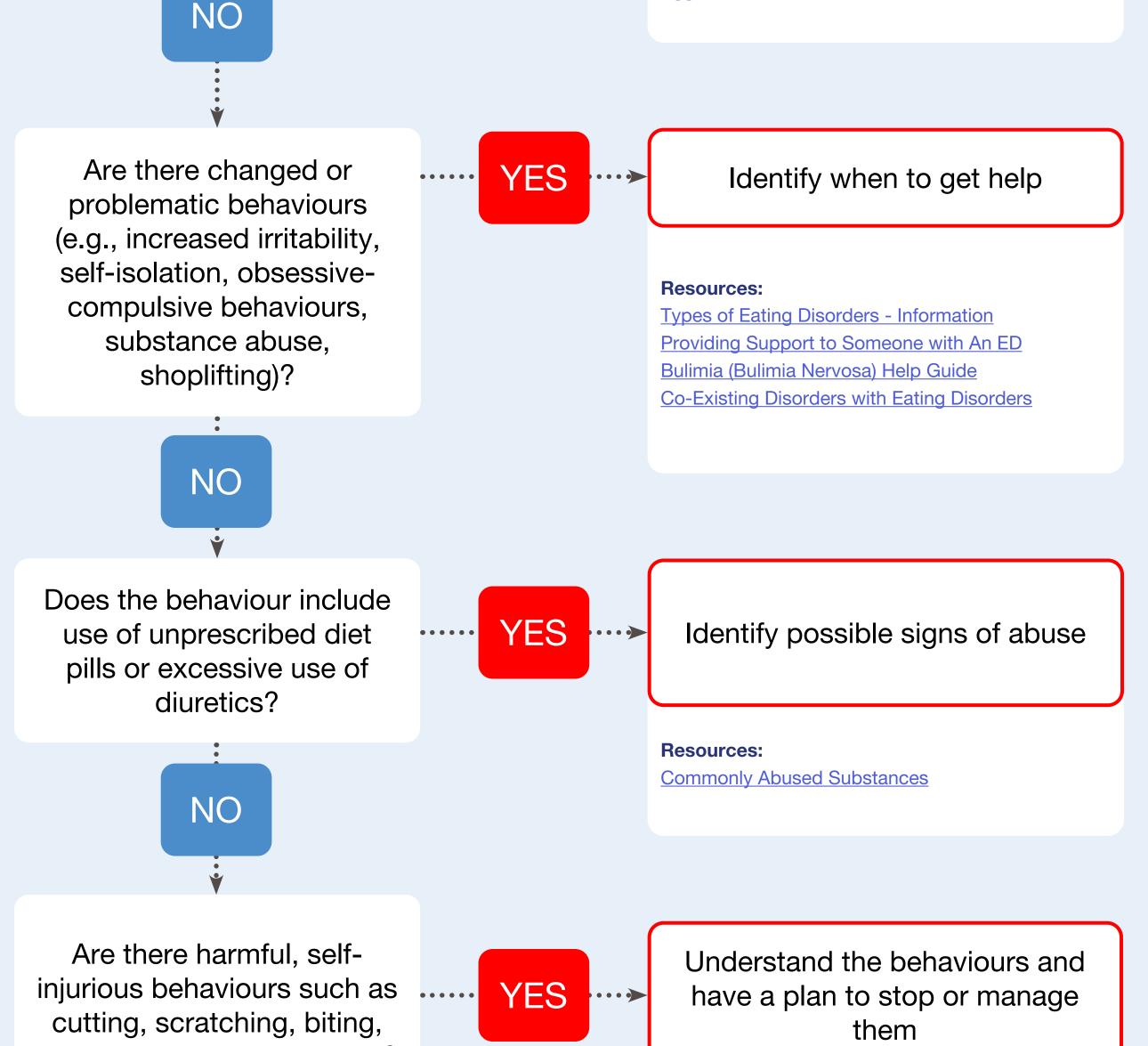


Pre-empt or de-escalate (calm or prevent worsening behaviour)

Resources:

Aggression

<u>CPI's Top 10 De-Escalation Tips</u> <u>Video Webinar – De-Escalating Violence and</u>



hitting, hair pulling, burning?

NO

Resources:

How to Help Someone Who Self-Harms – Mental Health First Aid Self-Harm and Eating Disorders

Does the behaviour include conflict at mealtime (e.g., throwing things, refusing to come to the table, trips to the bathroom after eating)?

NO



Pre-empt or de-escalate the behaviour

Resources:

Kelty Mental Health – ED Meal Support video playlist ED Meal Support – Introduction (Pt 0 of 5) ED Meal Support – Meal Planning (Pt 1 of 5) ED Meal Support – Supported Eating (Pt 3 of 5) ED Meal Support – Post Meal (Pt 4 of 5) The section below provides resources on other common topics for caregivers seeking resources.

I want to know more about making my home environment safe and supportive for recovery.

<u>Tips for a Home Environment to Help Recovery</u> <u>Dealing with Violence in the Home - What Can be Done</u>

I want to know more about finding and talking to a medical professional and about advocating for an individual with an Eating Disorder.

Looking for Professional Help - Tips Guide to Discussing Concerns with Your Child's Primary Care Provider Parents Survive to Thrive Guide What to Advocate for in Treatment

I want to know more about Eating Disorders.

National Initiative for Eating Disorders - Immediate/Crisis Support National Eating Disorder Information Center - General Information Eating Disorders Information Help for Yourself Help for Someone Else Parents Survive to Thrive Guide A Guide for When a Family Member Has an ED Helping 2SLGBTQ+ Individuals with an ED Eating Disorders in Boys and Men Information on ED Treatments Importance of Early Identification Intervention for EDs Guide for Parents or Caregivers: ED Medical Complications