

Eating Disorders and Getting Help

The information in this article is by no means intended as a substitute for medical advice from a qualified health practitioner. It does not recommend any one treatment, therapy or medication. Please seek medical advice as different medications suit different individuals.

The path to recovery is different for everyone, but it is possible.

Finding the right practitioner can be a difficult process. The Eating Disorders Foundation Helpline can assist you in the process of seeking help and choosing what type of practitioner is right for you.

When a person recognises that by seeing a therapist they are giving themselves a gift they are worthy of receiving, not as admitting defeat and worthlessness, then the long and vigorous road to recovery has begun.

Choosing the Right Practitioner

An important part of the recovery process is working with a practitioner who is right for you. Is the practitioner properly and fully qualified? Have they dealt with someone with an eating disorder before? Do they have experience and knowledge in dealing with an e/d? What treatments do they provide or specialise in?

You can ask your practitioner these questions beforehand to ensure you feel comfortable with their level of expertise and experience in dealing with eating disorders.

Some questions you may like to ask yourself and make note of when choosing a health practitioner:

- I feel safe and comfortable with this person
- I feel that my ideas and concerns are listened to and respected
- We agree on the nature of the eating disorder
- This practitioner's goals of treatment match my own goals
- This person is friendly and honest (and any other qualities that you would like your practitioner to have)
- This person willingly answers my questions
- This practitioner is open to including my family in the treatment process (if that is important to you)
- I think this person has something to offer me
- I feel supported and encouraged
- I am willing to work with this person

When Dealing with Health Professionals...

- See this as an emotional awakening
- It's a partnership
- State what you feel whether it be positive or negative. This is essential to a good working relationship
- You don't have to be the perfect client
- Don't be afraid to be honest
- The relationship will be built on trust but it can take a while to develop
- Let us know if this is not working for you, or we are not giving you what you want
- Treat yourself and your counsellor with respect
- Acknowledge and remember your path and progress. If things get hard, it's okay, is it worth it. Don't give up
- Expect set backs, they are a normal part of recovery and are to be expected

Your Rights When Seeking Help Checklist

When you visit a health practitioner, there are certain things that you have a right to expect, some of these include:

- Being able to see a qualified health practitioner who will explain the services that you will receive.
- To be treated with dignity and respect.
- You will receive competent and professional service.
- Your health and personal details to be kept confidential. In some cases, the law makes the health practitioner tell your information to another person or authority. If you are worried about how much you should tell your practitioner, then ask what their obligations are.
- Services that are free of physical and mental abuse, bullying, harassment, and discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, race, family status, sexual orientation or disability.
- You will receive a clear statement about fees.

(continued overleaf)

(continued)

- ❑ You will be clear about the outcome that you and the health practitioner are working towards
- ❑ If things aren't working out, or if you are not happy with the progress you are making, it is important that you discuss your concerns with your practitioner. Remember this is your journey, and it needs to make sense to you.

Public Hospitals and Community Health and Mental Health Services are covered by Medicare and are usually free or low cost. Waiting lists may apply and there are usually some criteria for access to services, for example, the severity of the eating disorder, or catchment zones.

Community Health Services and Women's Health Services provide support from counsellors and dietitians as well as social workers and general medical services. Services provided vary and may be more, or less appropriate depending on the health service and the nature of the eating disorder.

Community Mental Health Services. Adult (ages 18+) and Child & Adolescent (ages 0-18 years) Community Mental Health Services provide assessment and treatment for psychological conditions such as eating disorders. Initial contact will be with a duty worker who will determine the suitability of entry into the service. For the services nearest to you contact 9616 7578 or 9616 7571 or visit www.health.vic.gov.au and go to "directories of services"

Hospitals. If hospitalisation is required admission may be to either a psychiatric ward or a general medical ward depending on a person's condition, the hospital facilities and the reason for the hospitalisation. Some hospitals have specialist eating disorder units which provide inpatient services, outpatient appointments or day programs for people affected by eating disorders.

Questions or Complaints?

For a **doctor**, concerns can be directed to the Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria on (03) 9655 0500 / 1800 016 151, E: info@medicalboardvic.org.au, W: www.medicalboardvic.org.au

For a **psychiatrist**, contact the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists on (03) 9640 0646 or E: ranzcp@ranzcp.org W: www.ranzcp.org

For concerns regarding a **psychologist**, contact either the Psychologists Registration Board of Victoria on (03) 9629 8722 or www.psychreg.vic.gov.au, or the Australian Psychological Society on 1800 333 497 or (03) 9663 6166.

For a **counsellor**, contact the Australian Counselling Association on 1300 784 333, W: www.theaca.net.au.

For concerns about **any Victorian health service provider or practitioner** phone the Victorian Health Services Commissioner on (03) 8601 5200 or Toll Free in Victoria on 1800 136 066.

The **Mental Health Legal Centre** can also be contacted on (03) 9629 4422 or toll free on 1800 555 887.

If you have concerns about **treatment provision in public health services** phone the Health Services Commissioner on (03) 8601 5200 or toll free on 1800 136 066.

Information sheet prepared by:

The Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria *Your First Step to Recovery*

EDFV: 1513 High Street, Glen Iris, VIC 3146
Phone: (03) 9885 0318 or 1300 550 236
Email: edfv@eatingdisorders.org.au
Website: www.eatingdisorders.org.au