



## First steps to getting help



**These steps are intended for use in a nonemergency situation. If the situation is a medical or psychiatric emergency in which the patient is at risk of suicide or is medically unstable, call 911 immediately.**

Early detection, initial evaluation, and ongoing management can play a significant role in recovery and in preventing an eating disorder from progressing to a more severe or chronic state. The following assessments are recommended as first steps to diagnosis and will help determine the level of care needed for your family member. Receiving appropriate treatment at the earliest opportunity can aid in long-term recovery. The following assessments are recommended as first steps to diagnosis and will help determine the level of care your child or family member needs.

### Patient assessment by a physician experienced in eating disorders should include the following:

- Patient history, including screening questions about eating patterns
- Medical, nutritional, and psychological and social functioning (if possible, an eating disorder expert should assess the mental health of your child)
- Attitudes toward eating, exercise, and appearance
- Family history of eating disorders or other psychiatric disorders, including alcohol and other substance use disorders
- Family history of obesity
- Assessment of how the patient interacts with people regarding food-related feelings and behaviors
- Assessment of attitudes toward eating, exercise, and appearance

### Medical assessment should include the following:

- Physical exam including weight, height, body mass index (BMI), cardiovascular and peripheral vascular function, dermatologic symptoms (e.g., health of skin, hair growth), and evidence of self-injurious behaviors
- Laboratory tests (see list below)
- Dental examination if a history of purging behaviors exists
- Establishment of the diagnosis along with a determination of eating disorder severity

### Laboratory Testing Used for Diagnosis of Eating Disorders and Monitoring Response to Treatment

#### STANDARD WORK-UP

- Complete Blood Count (CBC) with differential Urinalysis
- Complete Metabolic Profile: sodium, chloride, potassium, glucose, blood urea nitrogen,
- creatinine, total protein, albumin, globulin, calcium, carbon dioxide, asat, alkaline
- phosphates, total bilirubin
- Serum magnesium
- Thyroid Screen (T3, T4, TSH)
- Electrocardiogram (ECG)

#### SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

##### *If uncertain of diagnosis*

- Erythrocyte sedimentation rate
- Radiographic studies (computed tomography or magnetic resonance imaging of the brain or upper or lower gastrointestinal system)

##### *If patient has been amenorrheic for 6 months*

- Urine pregnancy, luteinizing and follicle-stimulating hormone, and prolactin tests

##### *If patient is 15% or more below ideal body weight (IBW)*

- Chest x-ray
- Complement 3 (C3)
- 24 Creatinine Clearance
- Uric Acid





*If patient is 15% or more below IBW lasting 6 months or longer at any time during course of eating disorder*

- Dual Energy X-Ray Absorptiometry (DEXA) to assess bone mineral density
- Estradiol Level (or testosterone in males)

*If patient is 20% or more below IBW or any neurologic sign*

- Brain Scan

*If patient is 20% or more below IBW or sign of mitral valve prolapse*

- Echocardiogram

*If patient is 30% or more below IBW*

- Skin Testing for Immune Functioning

### **Level of Care**

Once a diagnosis is made, a level of care will be recommended based on the physical, psychiatric, and laboratory findings.

Pursue the level of care that is recommended for your child. This may include inpatient, outpatient, intensive outpatient, partial hospital, or residential treatment.

### **KEY SOURCES**

Navigating the System: Consumer Tips for Getting Treatment for Eating Disorders, Margo Maine, PhD for NEDA

Identifying and treating eating disorders. American Academy of Pediatrics. Practice Guideline Pediatrics 2003 Jan; 111 (1): 204-11

Practice guideline for the treatment of patients with eating disorders. American Psychiatric Association.