

How might an eating disorder dietitian help you?

This article was published on 10th February 2024 and written by Fiona Hamlin, Advanced HCPC Registered Dietitian.

Dietetic therapy aims to provide you with support, educational material and specialist advice on any area of nutritional intake to promote your physical and emotional health and to improve your overall well-being.

Eating disorder dietitians will support and guide you towards a healthy meal plan that will help you to maintain physical, emotional and psychological health. Your meal plan will be personalised, structured and balanced, ensuring that you are meeting your body's nutritional needs.

NUTRITION

- Develop a **structured, balanced meal** plan that fits into your routine.
- Exploring what is balanced eating including the importance of the five food groups (carbohydrate, fats, protein, dairy and foods high in fat and sugar).
- Checking if you are meeting all your **vitamin and mineral requirements** e.g. iron, calcium, vitamin D, fat-soluble vitamins) and where deficiencies are identified, we can guide appropriate supplementation.
- Ensure you are achieving **good bone health** through adequate calcium intake and support in achieving your healthy set point.

PSYCHOEDUCATION

- Exploring Set Point Theory – **What is a healthy weight for me?**
- Support with achieving your physical health goals for example weight restoration or maintenance and at the right pace.
- Exploring what is a **normal portion of carbohydrate, protein and fat**. We can support you in feeling more comfortable with portioning the right amount for you, and if needed moving away from calorie counting and weighing if this is a problem for you.
- **Balancing physical activity, nutrition and health.**
- Exploring the potential consequences of your eating disorder behaviours including the short and long-term physical and psychological impacts.

- **Interpretation of bloods** in relation to eating disorder behaviours such as purging, laxative misuse, and excessive exercise.
- Exploring the body's metabolic changes through recovery.
- Equipping you with the skills to identify the evidence-base (or lack of) **around social media healthy eating messages**.
- Where and how to source evidence-based dietary information.
- Exploration of **hunger and fullness cues** in starvation and full recovery.
- Dietary support for other medical conditions for example irritable bowel syndrome, and food intolerances.

"We don't tell you what to do. We are here to understand your difficulties and guide you towards your own goals"

FOOD FREEDOM

- Develop a **hierarchy of all feared foods vs safe foods** and support you to set your own goals to challenge these at your own pace.
- Understanding the **eating disorder rules and beliefs** that may be present and supporting you to challenge these.
- Understanding if checking behaviours are present for example **weighing foods, tracking calories, and step counter**. These often keep the eating disorder going. An eating disorder dietitian can **provide support and strategies to help minimise these behaviours**.
- Exploring the **principles of intuitive eating** through trusting your body to make food choices that feel good for you, without judging yourself or the influence of diet culture.

SOCIAL EATING EXPERIENCE

We understand that social withdrawal may be common in eating disorders especially if involved with food. Our role is to support you in **feeling more comfortable with taking part in social eating occasions with friends and family**.

- Joint family and carer sessions where needed.
- Helping you to devise a realistic, easily attainable plan to begin feeling more comfortable in social eating situations with the use of behavioural experiments and graded exposure techniques.
- To support the process of attending social events from the beginning to the end. Whether that might be choosing from menus or allowing others to cook for you.

ENHANCING MOTIVATION

- **Increasing self-awareness of eating patterns and behaviours** through the use of food diaries or weekly meal planning.
- Helping you to build your **support network** to help you make positive changes both short and long-term.
- Exploring the pros and cons of recovery and supporting you to **challenge your inner eating disorder voice**.
- Relapse prevention planning e.g. Identifying my triggers and early warning signs for relapse and **understanding what keeps me well**.

CONCLUSION

Eating Disorder Dietitians are **highly qualified** HCPC Registered Professionals who have received **extensive training** in eating disorders for example Masters level training or specific NICE recommended therapies.

Findings have shown that Eating Disorder Dietitians can provide treatment extending beyond refeeding, meal planning, and provision of nutrition education alone^{1,2}.

Dietitians can intertwine their expertise around nutrition with psychotherapeutic modalities when working with other members of a multidisciplinary team as part of ED treatment¹.

We like to see ourselves as dolphins, swimming alongside you, providing support and guiding you towards your own goals at your own pace.

"We are here to reiterate the message of what is important. We can act as your ally, to help you challenge your inner critic".

If you would like to book an appointment with Fiona Hamlin, HCPC Registered Eating Disorder Dietitian then please click here <https://fionahamlin.co.uk/contact/>

REFERENCES

1. YANG, Y.; CONTI, J.; McMASTER, C.M.; HAY, P. BEYOND REFEEDING: THE EFFECTS OF INCLUDING A DIETITIAN IN EATING DISORDER TREATMENT. A SYSTEMIC REVIEW. NUTRIENTS 2021, 13, 4490.
2. YANG, YIVE, ET AL. "I NEED SOMEONE TO HELP ME BUILD UP MY STRENGTH": A META-SYNTHESIS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE AND VALUE OF A DIETITIAN IN EATING DISORDER TREATMENT." BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES 13.11 (2023): 944.