



Eating disorder treatment options – children, adolescents & young adults

This factsheet provides an overview of the treatment options for children, adolescents and young adults in Victoria. After reading this page we encourage you to speak with your GP or leading clinician to determine the most suitable course of treatment for the young person involved.

Treatment overview

After receiving a diagnosis from a GP or other health professional, the next step is starting on an appropriate course of treatment **as soon as possible**. Evidence suggests that the sooner treatment commences, the better the chances of full recovery. However, try to remember that anyone can recover, even if they have been experiencing an eating disorder for a long time.

Treatment pathways and approaches for children and young people will depend on the age of the individual, the eating disorder diagnosis and the circumstances of the family involved.

In general, treatment will involve a combination of the following:

- ✔ Psychotherapy (therapy, counselling or psychological intervention usually through a psychologist, psychiatrist or mental health social worker)
- ✔ Physical health management (usually through a GP or paediatrician)
- ✔ Nutritional counselling (usually through an Accredited Practising Dietitian)
- ✔ Self-help (learning and avoiding triggers, applying coping skills, attending support groups etc.)

Sometimes it can be trial and error to find what works best for you or your loved one. It's important not to give up trying when it comes to treatment.

Public health system

The Victorian public health system is generally well equipped to treat eating disorders in young people with evidence-based approaches. The specialist training of treatment teams and established treatment pathways in the public health system can help guide and support families through what can be a confusing and challenging time.

Public health services do not require out of pocket fees for families, making treatment through these services a cost effective option. They also offer multidisciplinary teams, which can include clinicians such as psychologists, dietitians, social workers, psychiatrists and occupational therapists.

For these reasons, EDV often encourage families to explore treatment in the public health system as the first port of call. Depending on demand, there can sometimes be a waitlist to access public health services.

Pathways for accessing public health care in Victoria:

Eating disorders in children, adolescents and young adults is managed by your local *CYMHS (Child and Youth Mental Health Service, up to age 25)* or *CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, up to age 18)*. Your GP will likely manage the referral to your local

CYMHS or *CAMHS* team, however you can also self-refer through your local triage line. To find the details of your local service, visit the Victorian Government website: www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealthservices/child/index.htm.

The local *CYMHS* or *CAMHS* will coordinate the appropriate treatment for the young person. This treatment may take place in the community (for example at home through Family Based Treatment), or in a hospital inpatient or outpatient program. The following public hospitals provide both outpatient care and access to specialist inpatient care for children and adolescents with eating disorders:

Public hospital treatment programs

- ✔ *The Austin Hospital* – www.austin.org.au/mentalhealth/CYMHS/
- ✔ *Monash Medical Centre and the Butterfly Monash Health Day Program* – www.monashchildrenshospital.org/adolescent-medicine/
- ✔ *The Royal Children's Hospital Eating Disorders Program* - www.rch.org.au/adolescent-medicine/eating-disorders-service/
- ✔ *Box Hill Hospital* - www.easternhealth.org.au/services/mental-health-services/child-youth-mental-health-service-cymhs
- ✔ *Barwon Health Eating Disorder Service* - www.barwonhealth.org.au/services-departments/mental-health/item/eating-disorder-service
- ✔ *Alfred Health Eating Disorders Program* - www.alfredhealth.org.au/services/eating-disorders/

Private health system

Treatment for a child, adolescent or young adult is certainly possible in the private health system. Some families may choose to engage a team of private practitioners rather than go through the public health system, or while waiting to access public health treatment.

Evidence-based treatment models, such as Family Based Therapy, are available through private practitioners such as psychologists and social workers. The Medicare subsidies available through the Eating Disorder Plan also enable private care to be more affordable for families.

As always, we recommend working with your GP or leading treating clinician to find the treatment setting that will work best for the young person and the family. If you need help finding private practitioners in your geographic area, please get in touch with the EDV Hub.

Private treatment programs

The following facilities begin taking patients from the age of 16:

- *The Melbourne Clinic Eating Disorders Inpatient Program* – as this is private there are no catchment requirements and private health insurance is recommended – www.themelbourneclinic.com.au/services/eating-disorders.
- *The Geelong Clinic Inpatient Learn to Eat at Peace (LEAP) and Proactive Recovery Enhancement Program (PREP)* – as this is private there are no catchment requirements and private health insurance is recommended – www.thegeelongclinic.com.au/services/

Common treatment models

Anorexia Nervosa in under 18s

If you are a parent of a young person with a diagnosis of anorexia nervosa, you will likely be introduced to Family Based Treatment (FBT). FBT, also sometimes known as the Maudsley Model, is a treatment approach that has the most robust evidence base for the effective treatment of anorexia nervosa in young people who are still living at home.

For more information on FBT, please see our FBT factsheet.

Bulimia Nervosa and Binge Eating Disorder in under 18s

Some CAMHS/CYMHS will treat these other disorders, especially when comorbidities may be present e.g. depression, suicidality, self-harm.

Private practitioners can also assist here. Treatment models you are looking for include CBT-E for adolescents, and FBT-BN. All models should include supporting changes to eating/compensatory behaviours as a core component to treatment.

While waiting for treatment

Sometimes you may experience wait times before being able to access treatment in both the public and private sectors. If this happens to you or your loved one, there are some self-help resources to help you begin the recovery journey.

Books for parents/care givers:

- *How to Nourish Your Child Through an Eating Disorder*, by Casey Crosbie
- *Treating Eating Disorders in Adolescents: Evidence-Based Interventions for Treating Anorexia, Bulimia, and Binge Eating*, by Drs. Tara Deliberto and Dina Hirsch

• *Skills-based caring for a loved one with an eating disorder*, by Janet Treasure, Grainne Smith, Anna Crane

• *When your teen has an eating disorder*, by Dr Lauren Mulheim

Books for young people:

• *Unpack Your Eating Disorder*, by Maria Ganci and Linsey Atkins

• *Letting Go of ED - Embracing Me*, by Maria Ganci and Linsey Atkins

Contact EDV

If you would like more information about treatment, or to discuss your options further, please get in touch with us.

EDV keeps information on most public and private treatment services in Victoria as well as a database of health professionals who have registered as having experience with eating disorders. Call the EDV Hub on 1300 550 236, submit an enquiry via the website or email hub@eatingdisorders.org.au for more information.

