

ENCOURAGEMENT
UNDERSTANDING HOPE
INSPIRATION RELAXATION
SPECIALIST TRUST
CARE **ANOREXIA**
FREEDOM PLEASURE RELIEF
CONFIDENCE EXHILARATION
ACCOMPLISHMENT
STIMULATING LIGHTENING
COMFORT CLEAN REVITALISING
OPTIMISM PLEASURE
WHOLENESS SOOTHING
QUALITY CARE PROTECTION
SUPPORT WELLBEING VIGOR
HAPPINESS VITALITY REST
GUIDANCE TRUST HELP
DEVELOPMENT NOURISHING
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REFRESHING STIMULATING
HEALING AND RELAXATION
SANCTUARY ENERGY
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CARE PRIORY

Anorexia is a familiar illness in modern society. This leaflet aims to help you understand anorexia - the causes, symptoms and treatments available.

What is anorexia?

Anorexia nervosa is a relatively rare eating disorder in which you starve yourself, often becoming dangerously thin.

What causes anorexia?

Research has shown that your genes and your family's attitude towards food can make you more likely to suffer from anorexia. Depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, loneliness and emotional distress can also contribute to anorexia.

Eager to please and fearing failure, sufferers hide their inner fears and anxieties and, as a result, use food to control their feelings. A difficult experience such as the death of a loved one, being abused, a family upheaval or starting college may trigger anorexia.

Who gets anorexia?

Anorexia affects both men and women, at any age, but it's most common in young women between the ages of 14 and 25.

What are the symptoms?

Not everyone will have the same symptoms, but the most common are:

- severe or significant weight loss;
- limiting the amount you eat and drink, sometimes to a dangerous level, to control your body weight and shape;
- exercising more than normal in an attempt to burn off the calories you have eaten;
- focusing on food to try to cope with, and bring a sense of control to, your life;
- strong feelings of 'fatness'; and
- loss of menstrual periods and sexual feelings.

SOOTHING RELAXATION REVITALISING ENERGY HOPE HEALING AND SANCTUARY PEACE

The long-term effects of anorexia

Over time, you may develop physical and psychological side effects including:

- infertility in women;
- brittle bones, heart and kidney problems;
- extreme tiredness and exhaustion due to starvation;
- chemical changes in your brain, making rational decisions difficult;
- depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts; and
- feelings of self-harm and suicide.

The long-term effects of anorexia can be severe, even fatal, with 10% to 20% of sufferers dying from anorexia and its effects. Fortunately, with regular nourishment and treatment many effects are reduced.

How does anorexia affect family life?

Anorexia affects the whole family. Loved ones often find it hard to understand that an eating disorder is actually about feelings and coping, rather than food. This can lead to misunderstandings and arguments, particularly at meal times.

Can I recover from anorexia?

Even after many years with the illness, you can recover and go on to live a full life. But you must want to recover and understand that it can take years, possibly with some relapses to begin with.

How is anorexia treated?

Anorexia needs specialist help to treat both the psychological causes and its physical effects.

Contacting your GP is often the easiest way to get help and further treatment. He or she may offer you psychological counselling or dietary counselling, or refer you to a specialist for further assessment. This may lead to outpatient treatment or, if more serious, day or inpatient treatment. As a day or inpatient, you might be offered relaxation and body acceptance therapy.

If you're worried about talking to your GP, you can:

- consider writing down your concerns and questions;
- take a friend or family member with you;
- see another doctor in the practice; or
- join a new GP practice.

The type of professional support offered will depend on the services that are available in your area, and the arrangements that your primary care trust (PCT) has with other health authorities or private providers. Specialist treatment for eating disorders is also available privately through the Priory Group.

Family and friends can also help through their support and care. It is particularly helpful for relatives to understand that your eating problems are your way of coping with emotional difficulties, and that you may have mixed feelings about changing your eating pattern.

Therapies used to treat anorexia include dietary counselling, psychotherapy, family therapy and cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT). CBT has become more popular over the past few years and can reduce symptoms by identifying, challenging and changing unhelpful thinking patterns that create unpleasant feelings and dieting behaviours.

If you're dangerously thin, you will need to gain weight with the help of a dietary plan designed to restore your physical health and a normal eating pattern.

ON NOURISHING QUALITY MENT HELP CARE GUIDANCE SS SOOTHING STIMULATING

Family support

Most families benefit from family help aimed at supporting and managing any difficult relationships. Family work is helpful and encouraged, depending on your ability to cope.

When will I have to go into hospital?

When you lose a great deal of weight, the effects of starvation can affect your ability to think clearly and you will become more and more at risk. In extreme circumstances, if your life or health is at serious risk, you may have to go to hospital under the Mental Health Act.

Body mass index (BMI) is a helpful way to assess a healthy weight and is a useful guide to both risk and recovery in adults. It is less useful in children. A healthy BMI for an adult is between 20 and 25. However, if it's less than 17.5 then it's likely you're anorexic (if you do not suffer from any other physical illness causing weight loss).

We work out your BMI by taking your weight (in kilos), and then dividing it by your height (in metres) squared. The lower your BMI, the more likely it is that you will need to go into hospital.

Self help

Self help may be useful as the first stage of treatment or alongside other treatments. There are also many different self-help publications available, and you need to find the right one for you.

Self help groups, like those supported by the Eating Disorders Association, can be a useful support but they do not replace professional treatment. However, they can help sufferers and families understand that they are not alone, and offer valuable support and practical advice.

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines for treating eating disorders are the basis for treatment in England and Wales (for more information: www.nice.org.uk). NICE also publish information for patients and their carers. At the moment there are no equivalent guidelines for treatment in Northern Ireland or Scotland.

Finding help

If you feel that you or a close relative are developing anorexia and would like help or more information, you can speak to your GP or contact any of the following organisations.

Eating Disorders Association	0845 634 1414 (www.edauk.com)
Helpline e-mail address:	helpmail@edauk.com
NHS Direct (England and Wales)	0845 4647 (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)
NHS 24 (Scotland)	08454 242424 (www.nhs24.com)
National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence	0207 067 5800 (www.nice.org.uk)
Priory	0845 4 PRIORY 0845 4 774679 (www.priorygroup.com)

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Why should I choose Priory?

Our service

At Priory, our committed and professional staff provide the highest standards of care, understanding and service for everyone. This service brings hope and confidence, allowing our patients to take control of their lives within a safe and secure environment.

Expertise and innovation

Through our close links with the public and private sectors, we've developed the expertise and innovation to offer consistent and successful treatment. And, as Europe's leading independent provider of specialist mental health, neuro-rehabilitation and special education services, we bring experience and an excellent reputation.

We admit patients 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

This document has been edited by Dr Alex Yellowlees, with support from the Eating Disorders Association (www.edauk.com) and Plain English Campaign (www.plainenglish.co.uk).

The Crystal Mark applies to wording only.



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The Priory Hospital Altrincham

Rappax Road, Hale, Cheshire, WA15 0NX
Phone: 0161 904 0050 Fax: 0161 980 4322

The Priory Hospital Brighton & Hove

14-18 New Church Road, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 4FH
Phone: 01273 747 464 Fax: 01273 727 321

The Priory Hospital Bristol

Heath House Lane, Stapleton, Bristol, BS16 1EQ
Phone: 0117 952 5255 Fax: 0117 952 5552

The Priory Hospital Chelmsford

Stump Lane, Springfield Green, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 7SJ
Phone: 01245 345 345 Fax: 01245 346 177

The Priory Hospital Glasgow

38-40 Mansionhouse Road, Glasgow, G41 3DW
Phone: 0141 636 6116 Fax: 0141 636 5151

The Priory Hospital Hayes Grove

Prestons Road, Hayes, Bromley, Kent, BR2 7AS
Phone: 020 8462 7722 Fax: 020 8462 5028

The Priory Hospital North London

Grovelands House, The Bourne, Southgate, London, N14 6RA
Phone: 020 8882 8191 Fax: 020 8447 8138

The Priory Clinic Nottingham

Ransom Road, Nottingham, NG3 5GS
Phone: 0115 9693 388 Fax: 0115 9693 381

The Priory Hospital Preston

Rosemary Lane, Bartle, Preston, Lancashire, PR4 0HB
Phone: 01772 691 122 Fax: 01772 691 246

The Priory Hospital Roehampton

Priory Lane, Roehampton, London, SW15 5JJ
Phone: 020 8876 8261 Fax: 020 8392 2632

The Priory Hospital Southampton

Hythe Road, Marchwood, Southampton, SO40 4WU
Phone: 023 8084 0044 Fax: 023 8020 7554

The Priory Ticehurst House

Ticehurst, Wadhurst, East Sussex, TN5 7HU
Phone: 01580 200 391 Fax: 01580 201 006

The Priory Hospital Woking

Chobham Road, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey, GU21 2QF
Phone: 01483 489 211 Fax: 01483 797 053

Woodbourne Priory Hospital

21 Woodbourne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B17 8BY
Phone: 0121 434 4343 Fax: 0121 434 3270

PRIORY

Priory Group, Priory House, Randalls Way,
Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 7TP

Tel: 01372 860 400 Fax: 01372 860 401

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