

## Getting a head start

### What you can do before your child's assessment at the Pediatric Eating Disorders Clinic

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We are looking forward to meeting with you and your child on Assessment Day. Assessment will help us understand the difficulties your family is facing. If your child has an eating disorder, we will discuss our approach to treatment and our recommendations for your child and your family.

Your child's assessment may be several weeks or months away. We understand how difficult it is to wait for care. However, there are many things that you can do to support your child before her/his assessment. You can learn about eating disorders and begin to get your child's eating back on track.



#### What you can do:

- ✓ Encourage nutritional supplements such as Ensure<sup>®</sup> or Boost<sup>®</sup>
- ✓ Stop organized sports or physical activities
- ✓ Visit the doctor regularly
- ✓ Form a strong parental alliance
- ✓ Have meals as a family
- ✓ Supervise meals and snacks
- ✓ Be empathetic and firm
- ✓ Slow life down
- ✓ Educate yourself
- ✓ If you need help, call the Clinic Coordinator at 905-521-2100, ext 73497

#### What to keep in mind:

Eating disorders that develop in childhood and the teenage years are treatable illnesses.

With support from you and the health care team, your child can completely recover from this illness.

## **Encourage supplements**

If your child restricts her/his eating or has difficulty eating a variety of foods and is losing weight, start to insist on adequate nutrition. This can be in the form of food or encourage her/him to have a supplement such as Ensure<sup>®</sup> or Boost<sup>®</sup>.

If your child has lost a lot of weight, begin by adding 1 can of supplement a day to what she/he is currently eating. Consider adding another can each week until your child is eating enough to stop losing weight.

There are medical risks involved in re-feeding a very malnourished child or teen too quickly. Do not exceed this advice. Continue to see your family doctor or pediatrician regularly.

## **Stop organized activities**

Have your child stop any organized activities such as dance class, sports teams or running. This may be very difficult if your child is part of a team or has been involved in this activity for a long time. However, right now your focus needs to be on your child's health.

If your child is not eating enough, physical activities will prevent her/him from gaining the weight needed to restore her/his body to health. Your goal is to help your child become healthy enough to do these activities in a safe way.

## **Visit the doctor regularly**

Your family doctor or pediatrician is an important part of our health care team. Your child should continue to have regular visits with the doctor. The doctor will check your child's weight, vital signs and blood tests, and watch for changes in her/his health.

To prepare for Assessment Day, your child needs to have blood tests and an electrocardiogram (ECG) to check her/his heart. Please make sure that your doctor completes these tests and sends the results by fax to the 3F Clinic.

## **Form a strong alliance**

A strong alliance between parents is the best defense against an eating disorder once it has begun. Eating disorders have a way of dividing parents and wearing them down. Don't let this happen. Talk to your spouse about how you can work together to support your child through this illness.

## **Have meals as a family**

If you don't already, consider eating meals as a family. Although this can be difficult, family meals help provide structure to eating and help you to be aware of how much your child is eating and how difficult it is for her/him.

Supporting and supervising meals in a structured way greatly adds to how successful your child will be at renourishing her/himself.

## **Slow life down**

Helping your child to eat appropriate levels of nutrition can be difficult. This is often made more difficult by the rush and distraction of competing social activities and work commitments. Take an honest look at your current family activities and consider where additional time and support might be available.

## **Be empathetic and firm**

Tell your child that you recognize it is difficult for her/him to eat. However, as a parent, you must make sure she/he can eat enough to support her/his growth and development. Being firm and consistent will reassure your child and reduce her/his anxiety.

## Educate yourself

Start to learn as much as you can about eating disorders and how this illness may be affecting your child.

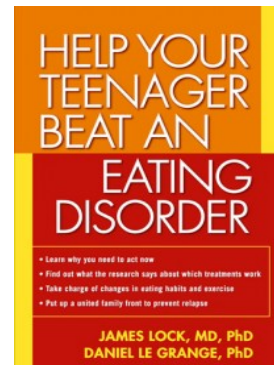
### Recommended reading

While there are many books about eating disorders, we have found that the books listed below are the most suitable for parents who have children under 18 years old.

#### **Help your teenager beat an eating disorder**

by J. Lock and D. LeGrange (2005)

We recommend that both parents read this book. We have modeled our clinic approach on this family-centred treatment philosophy. Reading the book will give you a head start on how to be effective in fighting the illness. The book is available online for under \$20 or from your local Public Library.



#### **Eating Disorders: A Parent’s Guide**

By R. Bryant-Waugh and B. Lask (2004)

#### **Help for Eating Disorders: A Parent’s Guide to Symptoms, Causes and Treatments**

By Dr. D. Katzman and Dr. L. Pinhas (2005)

### Information on the internet

You can find more information by visiting these websites. If you don’t have a computer at home, use one at the Public Library.

[www.feast-ed.org](http://www.feast-ed.org)

- Families Empowered and Supporting Treatment of Eating Disorders.
- Information and support for parents and caregivers helping loved ones recover from eating disorders.



[www.maudsleyparents.org/](http://www.maudsleyparents.org/)

- A non-profit, volunteer organization of parents who have used a family-based treatment called the “Maudsley approach” to help their children heal from eating disorders.

[www.eatingwithyouranorexic.com/](http://www.eatingwithyouranorexic.com/)

- A website for parents and caregivers of children with anorexia nervosa.

[www.gurze.com](http://www.gurze.com)

- A publishing company that specializes in education about eating disorders.

**If you would like additional support before Assessment Day,  
please call Cheryl Webb, Pediatric Eating Disorders  
Coordinator at 905-521-2100, ext 73497**