



Glossary of Terms

This glossary has been developed by ABC. It is intended as a guide for those parent and carers who are new to anorexia. The descriptions are written as an inform as clearly as possible. As you care for someone who is battling an eating disorder you will be learning about its behaviour, the effects of the illness and the terminology that you will come across as you support your friend, daughter, son, partner in their struggles to recover from the illness.

Alcohol abuse	A pattern of drinking alcohol that is excessive and has a destructive effect on physical and mental health.
Amenorrhea	The absence of menstrual periods in a woman of reproductive age.
Anaemia	Blood is lacking in sufficient red blood cells that carry oxygen to the cells, (haemoglobin), the individual will feel tired because the bodies organs are not getting what they need to function properly.
Anxiety	An emotional response that is characterised by a state of inner turmoil and heightened feelings of fear and worry.
Anorexia nervosa	An eating disorder where an individual keeps their body weight as low as possible by restricting the amount of food that they eat; sometimes making themselves vomit after eating and/or using exercise to burn calories.
Art therapy	The use of creative 2D and 3D techniques in order to understand and manage emotion.
Avoidance behaviour	A behaviour that a person will adopt to avoid activities, and foods; to reduce their perceived fears and avoid a forthcoming social situation, events or foods that they cannot cope with the prospect of. The person will often be able to offer a range of reasons to support their avoidance behaviour.
Autism	Is a general term that is used for complex disorders of brain development. This can affect the individual's interactions, behaviour and ability to communicate.
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	Autism Spectrum Disorder is a condition that affects a person's social interactions, communication, interests and behaviours. Children and young people with ASD frequently experience a range of cognitive, learning, emotional and behavioural problems. Some people reach adulthood without their ASD condition being recognised, however a diagnosis at any stage can make it easier to access support.
Binge eating disorder	An eating disorder where an individual will eat abnormally large amounts of food in a short amount of time on a regular basis. Binges are often planned in advance and involve binge food e.g. biscuits, cake, crisps, chocolate
Bipolar	A mental health condition that affects and individual's mood; a person with bipolar disorder is likely to experience uncontrollable dynamic and severe mood swings.



Body dysmorphia	The individual has a distorted view of how they look to themselves and other people. This is an anxiety based disorder and despite the reassurances of others they are convinced that they are defective, fat and ugly.
Body Image	An individual's perception of how their body appears to others.
Body mass index B.M.I	A measure that is calculated by dividing a person's weight in kilograms by the square of their height in meters. Commonly accepted ranges are; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under 17.5 Anorexic • 15 Severe Anorexia • 17.60 – 20 Underweight • 20 – 25 Acceptable weight • 25+ Overweight
Bone density scan (Dexia scan)	A scan that measures the mineral density of the bone. It can be used to diagnose Osteopenia and Osteoporosis.
Borderline personality disorder (BPD)	(also known as emotionally unstable personality disorder) Mind define a BPD diagnosis if an individual has 5 of the following; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme fear of abandonment • Intense and changeable emotions • Does not have a strong sense of who they are • Finds it hard to make stable relationships • Have thoughts of suicide • Self-harm • Struggle to control anger • Feel empty • Feel paranoid • Psychotic experiences • Can act impulsively
Bulimia nervosa	An eating disorder where an individual tries to control their weight by restricting the food that they eat regularly and then binge eating. After binging the individual will make themselves vomit and may also use laxatives to purge the food from their bodies. They will be at normal/near normal weight.
Calcium deficiency	A lack of calcium in the diet that can lead to Osteoporosis.
Calloused fingers	Callouses or scars on the knuckles may be due to an individual putting their fingers down their throat to induce vomiting.
Carbohydrate	Sugars and starches that produce energy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple carbohydrates are often found in refined processed food such as white sugar, white bread, pasta etc. • Complex carbohydrates take longer for the body to digest, these are found in vegetables, wholegrain breads, whole-wheat pasta, brown rice etc.
Cardiac arrhythmia	Irregular or abnormal heartbeat, in anorexia this change in the normal heartbeat rhythm can be caused by deficiencies and electrolyte imbalances.
Cerebral atrophy	Loss of neurons and the connections between them that affects the functioning of the brain. (This is reversible).



Chronic fatigue	A state of persistent exhaustion, that affects all aspect of everyday life, sleep does not alleviate it.
Cognitive Behaviour Therapy C.B.T.	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. A talking therapy that can help manage emotions and problems and change unhelpful ways of thinking and behaving.
Co- morbidity	A situation where the same person will have 2 illness or disorders, simultaneously or sequentially.
Day treatment	The patient will attend a specialist unit for certain days and times perhaps from 9 to 5 and for 5 days a week, going home in the evening.
Dehydration	Loss of fluid from the body that is not replaced.
Dental complications	Repeated vomiting causes corrosive stomach acid to flow over the teeth irrevocably damaging the teeth enamel, this can also cause permanent damage to the mouth and gums.
Depression	Inescapable and enduring feeling of sadness and hopelessness. An individual who is suffering from depression loses all interest in the things that they used to enjoy. An individual with depression may feel tearful, tired, anxious and may find it difficult to sleep.
Dialectical Behaviour Therapy D.B.T	Dialectical Behaviour Therapy. A talking therapy that has been adapted from C.B.T. to meet the individual needs of individuals who experience emotions very deeply. This therapy focuses on accepting oneself. The relationship with the therapist is used to actively motivate change.
Dietician (registered dietician)	A registered dietician is a qualified professional. They will have completed either a 4 year Bachelor degree in nutrition and dietetics, or a 3 year Masters degree in nutrition and dietetics. The registered dietician is concerned with the promotion of good health through diet, they are an expert in prescribing therapeutic nutrition.
Disassociated State	The individual feels disconnected from their feelings, thoughts, perceptions, sensations and memories.
Electrolyte imbalance	Electrolytes are chemicals that play an important role in balancing the minerals in the body which enable it, and especially the heart to function properly. Electrolytes include sodium, potassium, magnesium and calcium. An electrolyte imbalance occurs when the body is deficient through starvation, water loading or vomiting.
Family Therapy	A talking therapy that will include members of the family in order to enable the expression of each other's views, experiences and anxieties in a mediated session.
Fear Foods	An irrational fear of a food that in the sufferer's mind will cause them immediate and uncontrollable weight gain.
Growth retardation	Anorexia reduces the level of growth hormone.
Gum disease	Gum disease can be caused by a lack of nutrition.
Hair loss	Insufficient nutrition will lead to significant hair loss, this is reversible in recovery.
Facial hair growth (lanugo)	Insufficient nutrition will cause the growth of long downy hair on the face, this will disappear as the person recovers.



Infertility Insomnia	When the BMI drops into the anorexic spectrum periods will stop. Lack of nutrition will affect hormone levels and increase the chance of a miscarriage. Difficulty in falling asleep and then staying asleep. A body with a low BMI is restless.
Iron Deficiency	Iron is critical for the production of haemoglobin. Haemoglobin is found in the red Blood cells that help to deliver oxygen throughout the body.
Meal plan	A tool used to plan the times and content of meals and snacks in the recovery period.
Mania	Individuals have periods of over activity and excited behaviours in a way that seriously impacts on day to day life.
Muscle atrophy	The diminishing of muscles due to poor nutrition.
Nasal Gastric tube Feeding	A medical process in which a plastic feeding tube is inserted through the nose, down the throat and into the stomach in order to carry food and medicine directly into the stomach.
The New Maudsley Method	A treatment approach that aims to lower anxiety and stress and give the carers communication tools that will support and engage the individual who is struggling with an eating disorder
Nutritionist	A nutritionist is a non-accredited title; the term nutritionist is not protected by law. A person with different and unregulated levels of knowledge can call themselves a nutritionist. Because the title nutritionist can be adopted by unqualified people care should be taken when choosing an unqualified nutritional professional.
Obesity	An individual who is obese is carrying too much weight for their height and have a high BMI and a large amount of body fat.
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder OCD	A mental health condition where an individual has unwanted repetitive, obsessive compulsive thoughts, images or urges. In order to relieve the feelings, the individual carries out repetitive behaviours that they feel they must carry out in order to relieve the feelings that have been brought in by the obsessive thoughts.
Osteopenia	A condition in which bone density is lower than normal, this can be reversed. It may be a precursor to Osteoporosis.
Osteoporosis	A decrease in bone density that means that the bone is weakened, this cannot be reversed.
Over eating	Individuals feel compelled to eat when they are not hungry and they cannot stop eating when they have had enough.
Over exercising	An exercise disorder where an exercise routine becomes compulsive. This becomes a way to purge calories. The individual will plan the day around punishing exercise regimes. It may include refusing to sit down and continual walking around the home, going up and down stairs.
Panic attacks	A panic attack happens when a person experiences an overwhelming rush of intense physical and psychological symptoms in response to a situation. Symptoms may include nausea, sweating, trembling, palpitations, feeling weak.



Purging	This is an eating disorder in which a person of normal or below average weight purges their body. Purging methods lessen the retention or absorption of food. Purging methods include vomiting, this usually happens after eating and the use of laxatives. People with a purging disorder do not binge.
Recovery	The process of restoring mind and body. The journey is lengthy and complex.
Self-harm	An individual causes potentially serious injuries to themselves in order to cope with the distress of overwhelming negative thoughts feelings and emotions.
Suicide	An individual intentionally ends their life.
Treatment team	A team of professionals either from the NHS eating disorder services who will work together to deliver treatment.
Trigger	A stimulus, it may be a word, an image, an action or a situation that invokes eating disorder thoughts and behaviours.
Water loading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drinking excessive amounts of water while eating a meal to minimise calorie uptake. • Drinking large amounts of water before being weighed to increase body weight. • There is recent research that shows that drinking too much water can have a very harmful effect on the body's electrolytes