

“ Recovery can sometimes not be stable and steady: you do not always continue improving week by week. Sometimes improvement will vary from one time to the next and it can seem that you are getting worse or going backwards”

Recovering from an eating disorder is hard work, and requires determination and commitment. As you progress through treatment, we expect that you will experience many different emotions. You may find it very difficult at times to continue – we would like you to let us know when you feel like this, and the team will offer guidance and support to help you to make the right choices. Many young people with eating disorders make full recoveries with the right kind of help and support, and go on to lead normal lives.

**If you have any  
questions, please call  
us on 020 7829 8679**

## Notes

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Ref: 2005C015

Compiled by the Feeding and Eating Disorders Service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service in collaboration with the Child and Family Information Group

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Information for young people

Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Trust

# Eating disorders treatment at Great Ormond Street Hospital



Coming to see someone about your eating problem can be very difficult and frightening at first. For many young people, it is the first time they have talked to anyone about their problems, and may also be the first time that they have shared their feelings with their family and others.

Information for young people

You may feel confused about getting help – often the young people that we see say that there is a small part of them that wants to get better, and another part that feels very afraid and fights against this. You may think that you do not need or want help, and that people do not understand you. This can make you feel very alone, as if you are the only person with such a problem. Sometimes it is helpful to know that you are not alone with your problem – there are other young people who have similar difficulties.

“ When I first came to Great Ormond Street I was frightened, but then gradually I began to feel safe because of the eating disorders team. I began to realise that they were only trying to help me and I felt I could talk to them about my worries. I realised that when I’m healthy I can make my own choices and I could do sports again, but when I was really ill I couldn’t do that so I decided to get healthy and now I am healthy I can make my own choices again”

*Sally, aged 10 years*

We want to make things as easy as possible for you, and we think it important that you feel safe and trust us. One way that we do this is by being as clear and honest as we can with you and your family. We hope that this will help you to feel secure enough to talk about how you feel.

We think it is important that you have as much information and choice as possible about your treatment. We make every effort to listen to your views about what you think you need. The way that we work is to make sure that decisions are made through discussion with you and your family (or carers). This is so that your views are heard alongside those of your parents and the team, and also so that you understand how and why decisions are being made.

We hope to help you to make positive choices about your health. Sometimes, the amount of choice you have will vary depending on your health and how you are progressing. At first, it may feel that you have very little choice about what is happening to you, but you will find that this changes as you begin to get better, and you will be able to make more decisions for yourself.

There is no one “cure” for eating disorders although most (but not all) young people do get better in the end. Different approaches work for different people. We try to give you as much information as possible about treatment to help you understand what is happening and so that you can make positive choices about change. Usually, treatment involves a combination of approaches, and we decide which combination would be most suitable in discussion with you and your family. Some of these may include:

- **Psychotherapy/counselling:** these are “talking therapies” which can help you to understand yourself and your difficulties.
- **Creative therapies:** such as art, play and dance therapy can help to express and understand feelings, and may benefit other areas of your life.

- **Family therapy:** we always invite parents and families to be involved in treatment, as young people with eating disorders almost always need their family’s help. Sometimes we see parents on their own if this seems helpful.
- **Group therapy:** we offer the opportunity to attend group sessions and meet with other young people with similar problems.



Whenever possible, we try to help a young person to get better from their eating problem without needing to go into hospital. This means keeping a close eye on your physical health and on how you and your family are managing. There are some things that need to be included in your treatment, in order for you to really benefit. Even though it may be difficult, you will be expected to participate in some aspects of treatment that are essential for us to be able to help you.



These include:

- **Weight/height monitoring:** your physical health and development is extremely important. In order for you to function fully (both emotionally and physically) you need to be at a healthy weight. We will discuss this with you, and will support you to gain weight to a healthy level. It is also important that we monitor any changes in your weight/height so that we can measure your progress. We usually check your weight at the beginning of each visit to the clinic.
- **Medical tests:** we may arrange for you to have some simple medical tests to make sure that your health and development are normal. These may include blood tests, x-rays and ultrasound scans. You will be given more information about these tests if we think you need them.
- **Food and eating:** we will discuss changing your eating patterns with you and your parents. It is very important that we help you face your fears about eating in order to make a full recovery.
- **Confidentiality:** the information you give us is confidential to you and the team. If we think that it would be helpful for you to share some confidential information with your parents, we try to help you to find a way to do this. If we are concerned that you are suffering, or are at risk of harm, we have a duty to inform your parents and/or other professionals who can help you.