**INFORMATION AROUND CARING FOR A LOVED ONE WITH AN EATING DISORDER**

* While an eating disorder is a horrible and dangerous illness, **there is hope** a recovery is completely possible. With your guidance and support your child has an excellent chance of making a full recovery.
* Eating disorders cause several physical and emotional complications, many of which are a direct result of starvation. Embedded below is a study which demonstrates **the many effects of starvation** and emphasises why it is so important your child is supported to start eating again.

 

* We understand this can be challenging. Your child has an illness, and this means for now, they are going to find it very difficult to make decisions about their own health including eating. They therefore need you to **take control and be really strong** for them – even in the face of them becoming upset or distressed about the need to eat. It can be helpful to have some distracting activities lined up such as playing games.
* While we do not recommend counting calories this is the simplest way for us to give you guidance:
	+ If your child has been eating **less than 800 calories per day**:
		- Increase their calorie intake by 100 per day up to 1200 calories (i.e., day 1 = 900, day 2 = 1000), week 2 increase to 1500, week 3 increase to 1800 and week 4 increase to 2000.
		- After this if your child:
			* Gains 0.5kg please keep calorie amount the same
			* Gains between 0.2 – 0.5kg increase by 100,
			* Loses weight increase by 200-300 (depending on amount of loss).
	+ If your child has been eating **800 to 1200 calories per day** increase by 200 calories per day up to 1500 then follow the advice above.
	+ If your child has been eating **more than 1200 calories** per day increase by 300 per week as per advice above.
* If your child struggles with irregular eating i.e., limiting intake on some days then over-eating on others we would recommend they are supported to **eat 3 meals and 2 snacks a day**. They may find it helpful to understand restricting is causing their blood sugar to drop and their body is therefore making them binge to increase blood sugar again. Regulating their eating will help resolve this.
* If your child is vomiting after meals, we would advise they remain in the company of a parent for **1 hour after meals** and do not go to the bathroom alone during this time (please advise them to go to the toilet before meals). Distraction during this hour can be helpful.
* We would also recommend **all exercise, including walking, is stopped until a medical professional can advise it is safe**.  Due to the physical effects of an eating disorder any exercise can be dangerous.
* Your child will need you **to be firm about the need to eat but understanding** about their struggle. This means to show them you recognise this is difficult for them but insisting they must eat everything you give them, and you will remain with them until they are finished to help them complete their meal. *During the tough times remember you are doing what is needed to save their lives, even if they are angry with you to begin with*. They will thank you in the future when they are fully recovered. Embedded below is a list of ‘Top Tips for Parents’ to help you.

 

* Given the physical health risks associated with eating disorders we advise you take your child to A&E if they experience **any chest pains, shortness of breath or fainting**. Embedded below is a list of when it is particularly important to access medical advice:

 

* In the event of a mental health crisis please call **0800 6444 101**
* This is going to be a challenging time for you also and we recommend you take some time to look after yourself and seek your own support from friends or family members.  Eating Disorders love secrets so please share your struggle with your network and enlist their help on this difficult journey.
* In addition, we strongly recommend you and your child accessing the following support resources:
	+ **Beat**: a recognised eating disorders charity offering support to sufferers and carers
		- <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/support-services/someone-else>
		- Here you will be able to access telephone/online support groups, peer support groups and parent workshops to help you on this journey.
	+ **Kooth**: online support and counselling including around body image and eating disorders
	+ ***‘Skills based learning for Caring for a Loved One with an Eating Disorder: The New Maudsley Method’ by Crane, Smith and Treasure*.**  This is an excellent book that will also support you during this process.