



Glossary

Adolescence - The transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood

Adrenarche - The natural process in which the adrenal glands mature and begin producing increased levels of adrenal androgens

Amenorrhoea - An abnormal absence of menstruation, often caused by malnutrition, low body weight, or physiological stress. It indicates that the body has deprioritized reproductive function in response to insufficient energy — and is associated with bone density loss and long-term hormonal consequences

Anorexia Nervosa - Restrictive eating with intense fear of weight gain and strong body-image distress; can be medically serious at any size

Binge eating - Eating a large amount of food with a sense of loss of control. Binges often happen alongside shame or distress

Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) - A mental health condition involving obsessive preoccupation with a perceived flaw in appearance that others cannot see or see only slightly

Body image - How someone experiences their body in thoughts, feelings, and beliefs (not the same as how a body “actually looks”)

Bone mineral density - A measure of the amount of minerals, primarily calcium, contained in a specific volume of bone, reflecting its strength and risk for fracture

Bradycardia - Slow heart rate

Bulimia Nervosa - An eating disorder characterized by repeated cycles of binge eating followed by compensatory behaviours — most commonly purging (self-induced vomiting), but also excessive exercise, fasting, or laxative misuse — intended to prevent weight gain or “undo” the binge. Bulimia is often driven by shame, perfectionism, emotional dysregulation, and a profound fear of losing control. Many people with bulimia are within a “normal” weight range, which means the disorder is often invisible to others

Calorie counting - Tracking energy intake; can become rigid or obsessive and may increase anxiety or restriction
Compensating behaviours - Actions aimed at “undoing” eating (vomiting, laxatives, fasting, over-exercising). These can be dangerous and reinforce the disorder

Disordered eating - Harmful patterns around food/body that may not meet diagnostic criteria but still deserve support

DEXA / DXA - An imaging scan that measures bone mineral density (dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry); it can assess how strong your bones are and your chance of osteoporosis and future broken bones

Dysmenorrhoea - Painful menstruation, typically involving abdominal cramps

Electrolytes - Minerals (like potassium, sodium) that help the heart and nerves work. Purging can disrupt them and become dangerous

Emotional eating - Eating as a response to emotions. This is common and not “bad,” but can feel distressing if it becomes the only coping tool

Energy balance - The balance between the amount of energy you consume through food and drink, and the amount of energy your body expends through activity and fundamental physiological processes

Energy demands - Use of energy by human activity

Energy deficiency - The state in which there is not enough energy for body’s needs and for exercise

Fasting - Skipping food for long periods. In ED recovery, fasting often increases binge risk and nervous system stress

Fear Foods - Foods that cause significant anxiety, avoidance, or distress — often because of perceived caloric content, food rules, or associations with “losing control”

Female Athlete Triad - The interrelationship of menstrual cycle dysfunction, reduced energy availability and reduced bone mineral density

Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) - A hormone that plays a significant role in sexual development and reproduction by affecting the function of the ovaries and testes. It works alongside luteinizing hormone (LH)

Food Noise - The near-constant mental chatter about food — what to eat, what not to eat, calorie calculations, meal planning, food regret, what was eaten, what will be eaten next. Food noise is a consequence of restriction and scarcity: a brain that is not getting enough food becomes biologically preoccupied with obtaining it

Functional Hypothalamic Amenorrhoea (FHA) - a reversible form of secondary amenorrhoea where menstruation stops after previously normal cycles, due to down regulation of the hypothalamic control of menstrual periods

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Gastrointestinal - Relating to the stomach and the intestines

General Practitioner (GP) - A medical doctor and the first point of contact for patients seeking healthcare services

GI distress - Stomach discomfort (bloating, cramps, reflux). This can happen in restriction and also during re-feeding

Glycogen stores - Glycogen stores serve as a form of energy storage for muscles

Gonadarche - the earliest stage of puberty marked by the activation and maturation of the gonads, leading to increased production of sex hormones

Growth hormone - A peptide hormone produced by the anterior pituitary gland that stimulates growth, cell reproduction, and metabolism in the body

Growth spurt - a short period of rapid physical growth in height and weight, typically occurring during infancy, childhood, and adolescence

Haematological - Relating to the blood

Hyperfocus (food/weight) - Intense focus on food, rules, weight, or tracking — can be linked to anxiety, OCD traits, or neurodivergence

Hypogonadism - a clinical syndrome in which the gonads produce insufficient sex hormones, leading to impaired sexual development, reproductive function, and other systemic effects. Primary hypogonadism is when the problem originates in the gonads themselves, which are unable to produce sufficient hormones despite normal stimulation from the brain. Secondary hypogonadism is when the dysfunction lies in the hypothalamus or pituitary gland, which fail to properly stimulate the gonads

Hypomenorrhoea - Abnormally light menstrual bleeding

Hypothalamus - A structure deep within your brain that is the main link between your endocrine system and your nervous system. Your hypothalamus keeps your body balanced in a stable state called homeostasis.

Intuitive eating - A framework for rebuilding trust in hunger/fullness and reducing diet rules; often adapted in ED recovery with professional support

Ketosis - A body state that can occur with low carbohydrate intake or starvation; in ED contexts it can be a sign the body is under-fuelled

Libido - The psychological and physiological energy that drives sexual desire

Low bone mineral density - A condition that causes the amount of minerals contained in bones to decline, increasing risk of fractures

Low energy availability (LEA) - A state in which the body does not have enough dietary energy to support all of its functions

Luteinizing Hormone (LH) - A chemical in your body that triggers important processes in your reproductive system. LH helps with menstruation and testosterone production

Maturation - The process of becoming mature, from early childhood to full adulthood

Menarche - The occurrence of the first menstrual period in the female adolescent

Menorrhagia - Heavy menstrual blood loss

Menstrual cycle - Recurring fluctuations in hormone levels that produce physical changes in the uterus and ovaries to prepare the female body for pregnancy. It is marked by two main events: ovulation and menstruation

Menstruation - The process of discharging blood and other material from the lining of the uterus at intervals of about one lunar month from puberty to the menopause, except during pregnancy

Metabolic functioning - Relating to the chemical reactions in the body's cells to produce energy

Nourishment - Food and fluids that support energy, growth, and brain/body function — not “earned”

Oestrogen - A sex hormone that's necessary for maintaining your sexual and reproductive health. Males have oestrogen, too, but in much lower amounts. It plays an important role in other body systems for males and females, including supporting heart, bone and brain health

Oligomenorrhoea - Menstrual cycle length of greater than 45 days

Orthorexia - An intense fixation on “healthy/clean” eating that becomes rigid and harms health or daily life

Osteopenia - A medical condition in which the protein and mineral content of bone is reduced, but less severely than in osteoporosis

Osteoporosis - A bone disease characterized by a loss of bone density, making bones weak and more susceptible to fractures

Over-exercise - Exercise driven by anxiety, guilt, or compulsion rather than wellbeing; may continue despite injury or exhaustion

Ovulation - A key event in the female reproductive cycle, where a mature egg is released from the ovary into the fallopian tube, where it can be fertilised by sperm

Perfectionism - A trait linked to ED risk where “not perfect” feels unsafe; therapy can help soften rigid standards

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Peak Height Velocity - The period of time in which an adolescent experiences the fastest upward growth in their stature

Peak Weight Velocity - The maximum rate of increase in weight during the adolescent growth spurt

Pelvic floor - The group of muscles, ligaments, and fascia (connective tissue) that stretch like a hammock from your pubic bone in the front of your body to your tailbone in the back. These structures make up the bottom or “floor” of the bowl-shaped pelvis (in both women and men). They support your pelvic organs, play a role in bladder and bowel control, sexual function, and help stabilize your body during movements like walking and standing

Pituitary gland - small, pea-sized endocrine gland located at the base of your brain below your hypothalamus. It releases several important hormones and controls the function of many other endocrine system glands

Polyendocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome (PMOS) (formally known as Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)) - A common hormonal disorder affecting women of reproductive age, characterised by irregular menstrual cycles, excess androgen levels, and often the presence of cysts on the ovaries

Primary amenorrhoea - menstruation has not started by age 15

Primary Care Physician (PCP) - A medical doctor and your first point of contact for comprehensive healthcare

Progesterone - A steroid hormone which supports menstruation and helps maintain the early stages of pregnancy in females

Psychiatrist - A medical doctor who can diagnose and treat mental health conditions, and prescribe medication or other medical treatments

Psychologist - A mental health professional who uses psychological evaluations and talk therapy to help people learn to better cope with life issues and mental health conditions

Puberty - The natural, hormonally driven process through which a child's body matures into an adult body capable of sexual reproduction

Purging - Behaviours intended to “get rid of” food (vomiting, laxatives, diuretics). Can seriously affect the heart and electrolytes

Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (REDs) - This is impaired physiological function including, but not limited to impairment of: metabolic rate; menstrual function; bone health; immunity; protein synthesis; and cardiovascular health, caused by energy deficiency

Relative Energy Deficiency in Dance (RED-D) - REDs in dancers. A dance specific expression of REDs

Secondary amenorrhoea - menstruation stops for 3 or more months

Secondary sexual characteristics - The physical traits that develop during puberty and differentiate males and females. They are not directly involved in reproduction but are influenced by hormones.

Set point - The body's natural range where it functions best; dieting can push the body into stress and rebound patterns

Shame - A painful belief of being “bad.” Shame reduces help-seeking; compassion-based support can reduce shame

Starvation response - Body/brain changes when under-fuelled (obsessive thoughts about food, low mood, irritability, anxiety)

Stress fracture - A small crack in a bone that develops gradually over time due to repetitive stress or overuse that exceeds its ability to repair itself

Tachycardia - Fast heart rate

Tanner staging (Sexual Maturity Rating) - A system healthcare providers use to track children's development of key physical characteristics over time during puberty

Testosterone - A steroid hormone primarily responsible for the development of male sex characteristics and overall reproductive and metabolic functions in both men and women

Triggers - Events, feelings, comments, or situations that increase urges (stress, bullying, diet talk, sensory overload)

Under-fuelling - Not eating enough for the body's needs; can look like fatigue, irritability, coldness, poor focus, injuries

Unintentional under-fuelling - Not consuming enough food for their activity level

Urinary incontinence - An involuntary loss of urine and can include stress urinary incontinence (leaks with physical exertion, sneezing, laughing, or coughing), urge urinary incontinence (leaks associated with urgent need to go to the bathroom), or mixed urinary incontinence (experiencing both)

Weight stigma - Bias and discrimination based on body size. It can worsen ED risk and reduce safe access to care
Yo-yo dieting - Repeated cycles of dieting and regain; can increase body stress and reinforce disordered patterns