

Child and Adolescent Eating Disorder Service

# Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Eating Disorders (CBT-E)

## What is CBT-E about?

CBT-E is a treatment based on research evidence that helps a young person with an eating disorder to re-establish regular healthy eating, restore their weight (if underweight), and address any emotions and behaviours that are keeping the eating disorder stuck. It is a collaborative form of treatment where the young person and their therapist work out together what is keeping the eating disorder going, what you can do to take control of your eating disorder and how to enlist the help of others, such as parents, to get things back on track.

## How long does CBT-E treatment take?

The treatment lasts for approximately 6-12 months and consists of once or twice weekly sessions for the first couple of weeks, then weekly sessions and finally fortnightly sessions. There will be 20- 40 sessions, depending on the level of weight loss when you start treatment. After the end of treatment there may be a follow-up session after a couple of months to review how things are going and help you manage any setbacks and continue with your recovery.

Sessions usually last around an hour. At the first meeting there is an opportunity to discuss the treatment fully and to answer any questions you may have.

In order to give yourself the best opportunity for the program to work, you need to attend regularly and to follow the treatment plan. This includes an agreement to weekly weighing, using a structured eating plan, and self-monitoring of your food intake.

## What does CBT-E involve?

CBT-E has 4 stages. In Stage 1, the focus is on gaining a mutual understanding of your difficulties with food and eating. Your therapist will ask you to complete several questionnaires and a self-monitoring diary. The purpose of this is to help you and your therapist to figure out what kinds of problems you face, and the extent of your difficulties. Early on in treatment you will set out your goals. The advantage of having goals is that it will allow you to evaluate your progress throughout therapy. Finally, an essential part of Stage 1 is to work on establishing regular healthy eating patterns. You will be asked to keep a record of your eating habits and feelings and work towards eating regularly throughout the day.

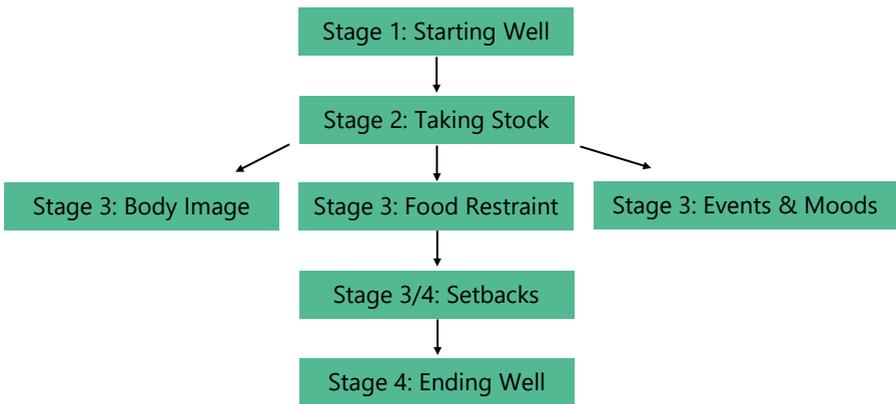
In Stage 2, you will review your progress and develop a plan for the rest of your therapy including the skills that you might want to learn. Of course, you will be able to modify your therapy plan together with your therapist throughout therapy to best suit your needs.

Stage 3 will focus on the processes that might maintain your difficulties with food and eating. Depending on your individual needs, you might focus on some of the following:

- Addressing concerns about shape and weight
- Improving your skills to deal with day-to-day events
- Making sure other important areas of your life don't get squeezed out by the focus on food
- Addressing extreme dietary restraint
- Addressing low self esteem, perfectionism or interpersonal problems if these are getting in the way of getting over your eating problem.

In Stage 4 you will think about the changes you have made and how to keep well in the future, including how to deal with any setbacks. With the help of your therapist you will produce a plan to help minimise the likelihood of relapse.

If you and your therapist decide it would be helpful, there may be scope within this approach to explore how some of your early experiences may have contributed to beliefs that maintain your current problems. If appropriate there is also scope to help you develop skills in understanding, managing and expressing emotions that you have previously found very difficult.



**Family Support:** Family involvement is generally an essential part of CBT-E for young people. Your parents are likely to have a session on their own at the start of treatment and then join the last section of some of your therapy sessions in order to work out how best they can support you.

## In-between-session work

Unfortunately, change is not magical; it requires some work and at times can be hard. An important part of CBT-E is working on the problem between sessions. We will ask you to make changes to your eating and record your thoughts and feelings at the same time. This will be in small steps that you will have discussed with your therapist. Lots of people have done this and found it helpful. It is done in the spirit of finding out “what would happen if...”. Research has shown that people who carry out the work between sessions get better faster and are more likely to stay well.

## Why are we using CBT-E?

CBT-E has a good evidence base as a treatment for people with eating disorders, and is recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). It has been shown to:

- Promote weight restoration to a healthy weight
- Decrease eating disorder symptoms
- Reduce or stop binge eating and purging behaviours
- Maintain a healthy weight

## Alternative Treatments

We understand that not everyone will find CBT-E helpful. As a service we offer a range of treatments for eating disorders. These include:

- Family-based treatment (FBA)
- Adolescent-focused Therapy for Eating Disorders (AFT)

As a service, we would usually recommend a Family-based Approach (FBA) as a first line treatment especially for younger adolescents. If you have not participated in FBA before, it may well be helpful to consider this with your therapist before other alternative treatment options.

*If you wish to know more about the evidence that supports this treatment approach, please let us know and we can give you more information.*

## Resources

Here are some books that give you more information about CBT-E. You might want to read them before or during your treatment.

*Overcoming Binge Eating by Chris Fairburn*

*Beating Your Eating Disorder: A Cognitive-Behavioural Self Help Guide for Adult Sufferers and their Carers  
by Glen Waller, Victoria Mountford & Others.*

## Questions?

If you have any questions about CBT-E or any other services that we provide please contact us.

### CAMHS Eating Disorder Pathway

Oxfordshire  
**Raglan House**  
23 Between Towns Road  
Oxford  
OX4 3LX

Tel: 01865 902720

Buckinghamshire  
**The Sue Nichol Centre**  
Bierton Road  
Aylesbury  
HP20 1EG

Tel: 01865 901325

<https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/ed/>

If you would like to have information translated into a different language, please contact the Equality and Diversity Team at: [EqualityandInclusion@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:EqualityandInclusion@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

**Arabic** يُرجى الاتصال بنا إذا كنتم ترغبون في الحصول على المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بتسبيق مختلف.

আপনি এই তথ্য অন্য ভাষায় বা আলাদা আকারে **Bengali**

পেতে চাইলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

**Urdu** اگر آپ یہ معلومات دیگر زبان یا مختلف فارمیٹ میں چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

**Chinese** 若要以其他語言或格式提供這些資訊，請與我們聯繫

**Polish** Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, skontaktuj się z nami.

**Portuguese** Queira contactar-nos se pretender as informações noutra idioma ou num formato diferente.

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust  
Trust Headquarters  
Warneford Hospital  
Warneford Lane  
Headington  
Oxford  
OX3 7JX

Switchboard 01865 901 000  
Email [enquiries@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:enquiries@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)  
Website [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

Become a member of our Foundation Trust  
[www.ohftnhs.uk/membership](http://www.ohftnhs.uk/membership)