# March 2023 Campaigns

## Eating Disorder Awareness Week (27th February – 5th March)

Around 1.25 million people in the UK suffer from these eating disorders, many in secret. They are of all ages, genders and backgrounds – eating disorders do not discriminate. Eating disorders include bulimia, binge eating disorder, avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID), other specified feeding or eating disorder (OSFED), and anorexia, which tragically has the highest mortality rate of any mental illness, though all eating disorders can be deadly. While this is the worst-case scenario, there are many ways in which eating disorders severely affect the quality of life of both those suffering and those who care about them. They steal childhoods, devastate relationships and pull families apart. But, with the right treatment and support, recovery is possible.

There’s no single cause and people might not have all symptoms for any one eating disorder. Many people are diagnosed with “other specified feeding or eating disorder” (OSFED), which means that their symptoms don’t exactly match what doctors check for to diagnose binge eating disorder, anorexia, or bulimia, but doesn’t mean that it’s not still very serious.

It’s also possible for someone’s symptoms, and therefore their diagnosis, to change over time. For example, someone could have anorexia, but their symptoms could later change to fit with a diagnosis of bulimia.

If you are wondering whether you have an eating disorder, this may bring up lots of questions, thoughts, and feelings. It may also be that other people are telling you that they are concerned about you or think you have an eating disorder, but you don’t agree. This can be difficult and cause conflict with those around you. Our Helpline team are here to discuss anything you are concerned about or would like to learn more about.

**Could you have an eating disorder?**

If you haven’t had reason to know much about eating disorders previously, it may be that your understanding of them is based on the way they’re shown in the media, for example. This often portrays a particular type of story in terms of who gets eating disorders, what causes them, and what the symptoms are. For example, you may have most often heard about the experiences of young white women with anorexia, which doesn’t reflect the full spectrum of eating disorders and people who can develop them.

* Studies suggest around a quarter of people with eating disorders are male.
* In 2015, 15% of the calls to our Helpline were about someone aged 40 or over.
* According to a study (Fairburn & Harrison 2003), 85% of people with eating disorders are not underweight.
* Stereotypes about who gets eating disorders might make them even harder to spot among older people, men and boys, and ethnic and cultural minority groups. The real number of sufferers overall could be much higher than we think, but particularly among groups like these.

Your circumstances, feelings, and symptoms may be very different to what you’ve seen or read about, but that doesn’t mean you can’t have an eating disorder. The way eating disorders present themselves can vary a lot from person to person. This means eating disorders can be difficult to identify, and often those suffering can appear healthy despite being unwell. If you think you might be having problems with your eating or feel that difficult feelings or situations are making you change your eating habits or feel differently about food, you could have an eating disorder or be developing one.

You can read more about the symptoms of different eating disorders at the link below. If you’re at all worried about yourself or someone else, it’s always best to seek help as quickly as possible, as this gives the greatest chance of a full recovery.

Eating disorders can be a way of coping with feelings or situations that are making the person unhappy, angry, depressed, stressed, or anxious. They are not the fault of the person suffering, and no one chooses to have an eating disorder.

For contact information and support please see the following link:

[The UK's Eating Disorder Charity - Beat (beateatingdisorders.org.uk)](https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/)

## Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

**Walk in Her Name 2023**

Walk in Her Name is the campaign for Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month from Ovarian Cancer Action. This is a month long step challenge or walk 100km to raise funds and awareness for research into Ovarian cancer treatments.

**What is Ovarian cancer?**

Ovarian cancer is a type of cancer that affects the ovaries, which are part of the female reproductive system. It can develop when abnormal cells grow in and around the ovaries and fallopian tubes. Anyone who has ovaries can get ovarian cancer, however the chances increase for people over the age of 50. This type of cancer can sometimes be hereditary.

It's estimated that there are around 4,100 deaths from ovarian cancer in the UK in every year. A rate of one woman every two hours. Because the symptoms are common and misdiagnosed, ovarian cancer is often diagnosed late. The earlier ovarian cancer can be diagnosed, the easier it is to treat.

**What are the symptoms of ovarian cancer?**

Symptoms of ovarian cancer are common among other, less serious, illnesses such as irritable bowel syndrome. The main four symptoms to be aware of are bloating, stomach pain, difficulty eating and needing to wee more frequently.

Other symptoms such as back pain, changes in bowel habits, extreme tiredness or unexplained weight-loss may also be ovarian cancer symptoms.

If you are experiencing any of the four symptoms mentioned, then you should make an appointment with your GP. Be sure to keep a record of your symptoms and when they occur, this will help support you in the conversation and assist your GP or other healthcare professional.

For further information on ovarian cancer and the month long campaign please see the following link:

[March is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month | Ovarian Cancer Action](https://ovarian.org.uk/march-ovarian-cancer-awareness-month/)

## National No Smoking Day (8th March)

**Quit and Win**

ASH Scotland's theme for this year's No Smoking Day campaign is 'Quit and Win' and through our media, social media, parliamentary and community engagement work, we will be encouraging people throughout Scotland to make attempts to quit smoking to benefit their health, wellbeing and personal finances.

**Quitting Smoking**

Stopping smoking is one of the best things you will ever do for your health. Quitting is much easier when you get the right support and there are lots of options to choose from. Even if you’ve tried before, maybe more than once, you can still succeed. What you’ve already learned will help you reach your goal of becoming an ex-smoker.

There is a NHS Quit Smoking app that allows you to track your progress, see how much you’re saving and access daily support.

If you can make it to 28 days smoke-free, you’re 5 times more likely to quit for good!

For further support and information please see the links below:

[Quit smoking - Better Health - NHS (www.nhs.uk)](https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/)

[No Smoking Day 2023 | ASH Scotland](https://www.ashscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/campaign/no-smoking-day-2023/)

## World Kidney Day (9th March)

It’s the topic that’s too BIG to ignore. On Thursday 9 March 2023, highlights just how big an issue kidney disease is; “It’s not a disease that affects only a handful of people; one in ten worldwide have it. Your neighbour could have it. Your parent. Your work colleague. Your child. Help us shout it from the rooftops.”

Living with kidney disease puts huge physical and emotional pressures on patients and their loved ones. These have only increased following the pandemic. Regular dialysis or a transplant are the only main treatments for kidney disease, however, the average waiting time for a kidney can be up to 3 years. During which time, patients have to balance their treatment and symptoms on a daily basis.

**What do kidneys do?**

* They remove toxins, excess water and waste products.
* Kidneys play a vital role in regulating your blood pressure.
* They activate vitamin D to help keep your bones and muscles in good shape.
* They’re essential for a healthy body.

**Why you shouldn’t ignore your kidneys**

Most of the time, kidneys work normally without any issues but sometimes they can be damaged or stop working so well. This is known as chronic kidney disease. CKD is a serious condition that affects over three million people in the UK and up to a million of these people may be undiagnosed. Find out how you can improve your kidney health

Early diagnosis and treatment, as well as changes to your diet and lifestyle, are vital and can often help slow down or prevent any further damage. However, if CKD goes undetected or is not managed well, it can progress to kidney failure, which is fatal without treatment. Patients with kidney failure will need regular dialysis or a kidney transplant.

Some other types of kidney disease, including inherited conditions, are not preventable but can be managed.

**Are you at risk?**

Although anyone can develop kidney disease, here are some factors that can increase your risk:

* Diabetes
* High blood pressure
* Heart and circulatory disease
* Family history of kidney disease
* A black, Asian or minority ethnic background could mean an increased risk of developing kidney failure more quickly.

For more information and support please see the following link:

[World Kidney Day 2022](https://www.worldkidneyday.co.uk/)

[Living-with-Kidney-Disease.pdf (worldkidneyday.co.uk)](https://www.worldkidneyday.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Living-with-Kidney-Disease.pdf)

## Nutrition and Hydration Week (13th – 19th March)

**Reinforce, Focus and Energise**

Nutrition and hydration week is an annual event with an objective to highlight, promote and celebrate improvements in the provision of nutrition and hydration.

The aim is to promote:

* The 10 Key Characteristics for Good Nutritional Care
* Find out more about Protected mealtimes
* Nutrition Advocates for each health or social care setting
* The minimum standards for good nutrition in all settings
* Sharing good nutrition and hydration practices
* Continued Education and Professional Development

Further information can be found here:

[N&H Week | Nutrition and Hydration Week](https://nutritionandhydrationweek.co.uk/)

## World Sleep Day (17th March)

**Celebrate Healthy Sleep on World Sleep Day**

World Sleep Society is issuing a global call to action to organize sleep health awareness activities on and around Friday, March 17, 2023 – the upcoming World Sleep Day. Members of World Sleep Society, sleep experts, and community health advocates in over 70 countries will be organizing local, regional, and national activities to promote sleep health.

**A Call to Action – Celebrate Healthy Sleep!**

* Share #WorldSleepDay online
* Organize or participate in an awareness activity in your community (and let us know about it!)
* Interview a credible sleep expert for your World Sleep Day content
* Write, create, or otherwise connect with your public audience about sleep health

**The 2023 Theme: Sleep Is Essential for Health**

The theme for this World Sleep Day is Sleep is Essential for Health. Just like eating well and exercising, sleep is a behaviour that is foundational to one’s physical, mental, and social well-being. However, sleep is not yet commonly considered an essential behaviour for good health. World Sleep Day is an opportunity to promote sleep health alongside thousands of other sleep health professionals and advocates. When we all promote sleep health and #WorldSleepDay together, our combined effort is greater than the sum of its parts. Spread the word about sleep health on World Sleep Day and help elevate the conversation around sleep!

The NHS have reported on the impact of shift-work in Healthcare, and how this contributes to health and wellbeing. It reported that 45% of Women and 40% of men have a long-standing illness, with increased risk of fatigue, type 2 diabetes, obesity and increased sleep deprivation. Often, this results in poor work life balance, with fatigue and sleep deprivation contributing to work and road accidents, poor patient care and reduced productivity. It is important that shift work is managed appropriately with healthy work patterns, time for breaks and agreed protocols. If you’ve any concerns in regards to the above please discuss with your manager in the first instance.

Further information can be found below:

[World Sleep Day March 18, 2022](https://worldsleepday.org/)

[Shift work in healthcare infographic | NHS Employers](https://www.nhsemployers.org/articles/shift-work-healthcare-infographic)

## World Oral Health Day (20th March)

In 2021, the 3 year campaign theme of *Be Proud of Your Mouth* was launched. This theme wants people to value and take care of their oral health and to make the right decisions to protect it. In year one, the focus was on how oral health affects our overall health. In 2022, the aim was to inspire action by highlighting how a healthy mouth is important for our happiness and well-being. In 2023, the focus will be on the importance of caring for your mouth at every stage of life.

Information and resources can be found at the link below:

[World Oral Health Day](https://www.worldoralhealthday.org/)

## World Down Syndrome Day (21st March)

The theme for World Down Syndrome Day 2023, is calls for a commitment of, *With Us Not For Us*.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities calls for everyone to have the freedom to make their own choices. But people with Down syndrome often have poor or controlling support. Often their supporters do things *For* them, not With them.

**A human rights-based approach to disability**

The message of With Us Not For Us is key to a human rights-based approach to disability. DSi is committed to moving on from the outdated charity model of disability, where people with disability were treated as objects of charity, deserving of pity and relying on others for support. A human rights-based approach views people with disabilities as having the right to be treated fairly and have the same opportunities as everyone else, working *with* others to improve their lives.

For further information and resources please see the following link:

[Home - World Down Syndrome Day](https://www.worlddownsyndromeday.org/)

## World Autism Acceptance Week (27th March – 2nd April)

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. More than one in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK.

Autism is a spectrum condition and affects people in different ways. Like all people, autistic people have their own strengths and weaknesses. Below is a list of difficulties autistic people may share, including the two key difficulties required for a diagnosis.

**Social communication and social interaction challenges**

**Social communication**

Autistic people have difficulties with interpreting both verbal and non-verbal language like gestures or tone of voice. Some autistic people are unable to speak or have limited speech while other autistic people have very good language skills but struggle to understand sarcasm or tone of voice. Other challenges include:

* taking things literally and not understanding abstract concepts
* needing extra time to process information or answer questions
* repeating what others say to them (this is called echolalia)

**Social interaction**

Autistic people often have difficulty 'reading' other people - recognising or understanding others' feelings and intentions - and expressing their own emotions. This can make it very hard to navigate the social world. Autistic people may:

* appear to be insensitive
* seek out time alone when overloaded by other people
* not seek comfort from other people
* appear to behave 'strangely' or in a way thought to be socially inappropriate
* find it hard to form friendships.

**Repetitive and restrictive behaviour**

With its unwritten rules, the world can seem a very unpredictable and confusing place to autistic people. This is why they often prefer to have routines so that they know what is going to happen. They may want to travel the same way to and from school or work, wear the same clothes or eat exactly the same food for breakfast.

Autistic people may also repeat movements such as hand flapping, rocking or the repetitive use of an object such as twirling a pen or opening and closing a door. Autistic people often engage in these behaviours to help calm themselves when they are stressed or anxious, but many autistic people do it because they find it enjoyable.

Change to routine can also be very distressing for autistic people and make them very anxious. It could be having to adjust to big events like Christmas or changing schools, facing uncertainty at work, or something simpler like a bus detour that can trigger their anxiety.

**Over- or under-sensitivity to light, sound, taste or touch**

Autistic people may experience over- or under-sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light, colours, temperatures or pain. For example, they may find certain background sounds like music in a restaurant, which other people ignore or block out, unbearably loud or distracting. This can cause anxiety or even physical pain. Many autistic people prefer not to hug due to discomfort, which can be misinterpreted as being cold and aloof.

Many autistic people avoid everyday situations because of their sensitivity issues. Schools, workplaces and shopping centres can be particularly overwhelming and cause sensory overload. There are many simple adjustments that can be made to make environments more autism-friendly.

**Highly focused interests or hobbies**

Many autistic people have intense and highly focused interests, often from a fairly young age. These can change over time or be lifelong. Autistic people can become experts in their special interests and often like to share their knowledge. A stereotypical example is trains but that is one of many. Greta Thunberg's intense interest, for example, is protecting the environment.

Like all people, autistic people gain huge amounts of pleasure from pursuing their interests and see them as fundamental to their wellbeing and happiness.

Being highly focused helps many autistic people do well academically and in the workplace but they can also become so engrossed in particular topics or activities that they neglect other aspects of their lives.

**Extreme anxiety**

Anxiety is a real difficulty for many autistic adults, particularly in social situations or when facing change. It can affect a person psychologically and physically and impact quality of life for autistic people and their families.

It is very important that autistic people learn to recognise their triggers and find coping mechanisms to help reduce their anxiety. However, many autistic people have difficulty recognising and regulating their emotions. Over one third of autistic people have serious mental health issues and too many autistic people are being failed by mental health services.

**Meltdowns and shutdowns**

When everything becomes too much for an autistic person, they can go into meltdown or shutdown. These are very intense and exhausting experiences.

A meltdown happens when someone becomes completely overwhelmed by their current situation and temporarily loses behavioural control. This loss of control can be verbal (eg shouting, screaming, crying) or physical (eg kicking, lashing out, biting) or both. Meltdowns in children are often mistaken for temper tantrums and parents and their autistic children often experience hurtful comments and judgmental stares from less understanding members of the public.

A shutdown appears less intense to the outside world but can be equally debilitating. Shutdowns are also a response to being overwhelmed but may appear more passive - eg an autistic person going quiet or 'switching off'. One autistic woman described having a shutdown as: 'just as frustrating as a meltdown, because of not being able to figure out how to react how I want to, or not being able to react at all; there isn’t any ‘figuring out’ because the mind feels like it is past a state of being able to interpret.'

The understanding and definition of Autism is constantly evolving as research, knowledge, understanding and awareness increases globally. For further support and information please see the following link to the National Autistic Society, and to see how you can get involved this World Autism Acceptance Week:

[National Autistic Society (autism.org.uk)](https://www.autism.org.uk/)