

1-7 September 2025



Body Image and Eating Disorder Awareness Week

Unpacking the 'Why': What causes eating disorders?

SUGGESTED COMMUNICATIONS

About BIEDAW

Body Image and Eating Disorder Awareness Week (#BIEDAW) is a national campaign proudly led by Australia's leading eating disorder organisations, including [Butterfly Foundation](#), [Australia and New Zealand Academy for Eating Disorders](#) (ANZAED), [Eating Disorders Victoria](#), [Eating Disorders Queensland](#), [Eating Disorders Families Australia](#) and the [National Eating Disorder Collaboration](#).

BIEDAW aims to raise awareness of body image concerns and eating disorders, and is celebrated annually in the first full week of September: 1-7 September, 2025.

2025 theme: Unpacking the 'Why': What causes eating disorders?

Eating disorders are complex mental illnesses. There is never one cause of an eating disorder – an eating disorder develops due to a combination of biological, psychological and sociocultural factors. While body dissatisfaction is one of the leading risk factors in developing an eating disorder, it is important to understand other causes and risk factors that may contribute.

The BIEDAW 2025 theme 'Unpacking the Why' aims to expand understanding of how and why eating disorders develop and how to access treatment and support. 'Unpacking the Why' builds empathy for the many people whose experiences of an eating disorder may lead them to feel 'invisible' behind common stereotypes.

How you can get involved

- Create your own social media posts or newsletter communications using the key messages and key stats below. Download BIEDAW social media tiles and assets [here](#).
- Share BIEDAW social media posts from Australia's national eating disorder organisations from 1-7 September 2025. [Butterfly Foundation](#) | [ANZAED](#) | [Eating Disorders Victoria](#) | [Eating Disorders QLD](#) | [National Eating Disorder Collaboration](#) | [Eating Disorders Families Australia](#)
- Stay tuned to the [BIEDAW website](#) for more events and activities you can get involved in.

Key messages

- Eating disorders are complex mental illnesses. There is never one cause of an eating disorder – an eating disorder develops due to a combination of biological, psychological and sociocultural factors.

- Eating disorders are not always related to body image - while body dissatisfaction is one of the leading risk factors in developing an eating disorder, it is important to understand other causes and risk factors that may contribute.
- While body image concerns are a significant factor for many, these illnesses can also develop due to a range of other influences, including (but not limited to) trauma, sensory sensitivities, genetics, personality traits, culture, family history, and co-occurring health conditions such as diabetes, endometriosis and others.
- Understanding the diverse risk factors that contribute to the development of eating disorders is essential in identifying at risk groups, providing effective early intervention and improving treatment and support.
- With eating disorders still widely misunderstood in society, spreading awareness is essential.
- No matter how the eating disorder developed, recovery is possible, and Butterfly is here to help.

Suggested posts & communication

Shorter

Option 1:

We're proud to be joining @thebutterflyfoundation this Body Image and Eating Disorder Awareness Week 1-7 Sept (#BIEDAW) to 'Unpack the Why' and explore the causes of eating disorders. Head to www.butterfly.org.au/biedaw to find out more.

Option 2:

Over 1.1 million people in Australia are affected by an eating disorder. We're proud to be joining Australia's national eating disorder organisations like @thebutterflyfoundation this Body Image and Eating Disorder Awareness Week, 1-7 September, to spread awareness and help make a change. www.butterfly.org.au/biedaw

Option 3:

1 in 10 people in Australia will experience an eating disorder in their lifetime. When we know why, we can provide better support. Get involved in Body Image and Eating Disorder Awareness Week (#BIEDAW), this 1-7 September to learn more about the causes of eating disorders and how to access support. www.butterfly.org.au/biedaw

Longer

It's Body Image and Eating Disorder Awareness Week (#BIEDAW 1-7 September) and it's time we expanded our understanding of why eating disorders develop and how to access support.

With over 1.1 million people in Australia experiencing an eating disorder in any given year, understanding why these illnesses develop allows us to provide better support.

'Unpacking the Why' builds empathy for the many people whose experiences of an eating disorder may lead them to feel 'invisible' behind common stereotypes, because it's not always body image related – eating disorders can emerge due to a range of other influences, including (but not limited to) trauma, sensory sensitivities, genetics, personality traits, culture, family history, and co-occurring health conditions such as diabetes, endometriosis and others.

No matter how the eating disorder developed, recovery is possible, and organisations like @thebutterflyfoundation are here to help. Find out more about #BIEDAW by heading to www.butterfly.org.au/biedaw or for confidential and free support, connect with the Butterfly National Helpline by calling 1800 ED HOPE (1800 33 4673) or visit www.butterfly.org.au to chat online or email, 7 days a week, 8am-midnight (AEST).

Key stats and further information

Stigma + prevalence

- In Australia, over 1.1 million people are impacted by an eating disorder in any given year.¹
- 1 in 10 people in Australia will experience an eating disorder in their lifetime.²
- The number of people impacted by eating disorders has increased 21% since 2012.³
- Less than one in three (30%) of individuals affected reach out for help.⁴
- Less than a quarter of people have referred someone they're concerned about to support services.⁵
- 1 in 7 (14%) agree people with eating disorders could 'snap out of it'.⁶
- Only 11% of people living in Australia can spot the signs and symptoms of an eating disorder.⁷

Specific Intersections

- **Trauma:** Disordered eating may emerge as a coping mechanism for trauma-related thoughts and feelings and many people with eating disorders will also have a history of psychological trauma.
 - In one study, nearly 70% of women diagnosed with an eating disorder reported exposure to a traumatic event, while 50% reported symptoms indicative of a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).⁸
- **Neurodivergence:** Research demonstrates that neurodivergent people are more likely to experience feeding and eating difficulties in comparison to neurotypical people, and this is often in the absence of body image concerns.⁹
 - Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) is estimated to affect 21% of autistic individuals.¹⁰
 - ARFID is almost as common as Anorexia, impacting 3% of people with eating disorders.¹¹
- **Co-occurring conditions:** Research demonstrates that at least half, as possibly as many as 97% of people diagnosed with an eating disorder also receive a diagnosis for at least one more psychiatric disorder, with the most common being depression, anxiety, PTSD and trauma, substance use disorders, personality disorders and suicidal ideation.¹²

¹ Butterfly Foundation, Paying the Price 2024 <https://butterfly.org.au/who-we-are/research-policy-publications/payingtheprice2024/>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Butterfly Foundation, Community Insights Report 2024 <https://butterfly.org.au/who-we-are/research-policy-publications/communityinsights2024/>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Hepp, U., Spindler, A., Schnyder, U., Kraemer, B., & Milos, G. (2007). Post-traumatic stress disorder in women with eating disorders. *Eating Weight Disorders*, 12(1), 24-27. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf03327778>

⁹ Cobbaert, L. & Rose, A. (2023). Eating Disorders and Neurodivergence: A Stepped Care Approach. <https://nedc.com.au/assets/NEDC-Publications/Eating-Disorders-and-Neurodivergence-A-Stepped-Care-Approach.pdf?2025071105>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Butterfly Foundation, Paying the Price 2024 <https://butterfly.org.au/who-we-are/research-policy-publications/payingtheprice2024/>

¹² National Eating Disorder Collaboration, n.d. <https://nedc.com.au/eating-disorders/types/co-occurring-conditions>

- Diabetes: There is an increased prevalence of disordered eating behaviours among individuals with both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes.¹³
- Genetics: An individual is 11 times more likely to develop Anorexia Nervosa if they have a relative with the disorder as compared to someone with no family history.¹⁴
- Coeliac disease: Individuals with Anorexia Nervosa (AN) are at a significantly greater risk of coeliac disease compared to adults without AN.¹⁵
- Autoimmune and autoinflammatory diseases: Those who experience autoimmune and autoinflammatory diseases are significantly more at risk of developing an eating disorder.¹⁶

Help-seeking information

Less than a third of people with eating disorders are able to access the help and support they need to recover. Sharing information about available support and treatment options to encourage help-seeking is a key goal of BIEDAW.

Butterfly Foundation

The Butterfly National Helpline is Australia's national Helpline for eating disorders and body image concerns. For confidential and free support, call 1800 ED HOPE (1800 33 4673) or visit www.butterfly.org.au to chat online or email, 7 days a week, 8am-midnight (AEST). Access [support groups and programs](#), find out more about [residential treatment](#) or search the [Referral Database](#) to find practitioners closest to your area.

ANZAED

Finding safe, effective, evidence-based care can be tricky. Find Credentialed Eating Disorder Clinicians all in one place: connected.anzaed.org.au

Eating Disorders Victoria

For people in Victoria, [Contact the EDV Hub](#) to learn what EDV services are available to you.

Eating Disorders Queensland

For people in Queensland, [contact EDQ](#) to access services to support your recovery.

Eating Disorders Families Australia

For support and information for carers and families supporting loved ones with eating disorders, [contact EDFA](#).

Contact

For further information please contact: comms@butterfly.org.au

¹³ Nip ASY, Reboussin BA, Dabelea D, Bellatorre A, Mayer-Davis EJ, Kahkoska AR, et al. Disordered eating behaviors in youth and young adults with type 1 or type 2 diabetes receiving insulin therapy: the SEARCH for diabetes in youth study. *Diabetes Care*. 2019;42(5):859–66.

¹⁴ Barakat, S., McLean, S.A., Bryant, E. et al. Risk factors for eating disorders: findings from a rapid review. *J Eat Disord* 11, 8 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40337-022-00717-4>

¹⁵ Nikniaz Z, Beheshti S, Abbasalizad Farhangi M, Nikniaz L. A systematic review and meta-analysis of the prevalence and odds of eating disorders in patients with celiac disease and vice-versa. *Int J Eat Disord*. 2021;54(9):1563–74.

¹⁶ Zerwas S, Larsen JT, Petersen L, Thornton LM, Quaranta M, Koch SV, et al. Eating disorders, autoimmune, and autoinflammatory disease. *Pediatrics*. 2017;140(6):e20162089.