



Dr. Teizeem Dhanji (UK)  
CONSULTANT CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRIST  
JOINT LEAD, EATING DISORDER SERVICE



Dr. Victoria Mountford (UK)  
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST  
JOINT LEAD, EATING DISORDER SERVICE

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS **BEGINNING EATING DISORDER TREATMENT**

Seeking treatment for an eating disorder can be anxiety provoking (as an adult, young person or a family member accompanying their loved one). You may be unsure of what to expect, or you may be nervous about what might happen. Below, we outline answers to some of the most common questions that we receive from those beginning their journey with us. Please know that while talking about your difficulties may feel upsetting or difficult, this is normal, and many feel relieved and hopeful that their treatment journey is beginning. Our team are here to support you and guide you through the process.

### ***1. What will the assessment look like?***

Our assessment process at The LightHouse Arabia typically takes 1.5-2 hours. You will have spoken to one of our team prior to the assessment, to allocate you to the most suitable clinician for the assessment. We may have also asked that you have certain tests (i.e. blood tests), before your first appointment.

During the assessment, your clinician will discuss the difficulties you have been having with eating, weight or body image. We will also ask questions to get to know you better (and your family, for children and young people). Usually we ask children and adolescents to come with their parents, or you may want to involve a partner, as often eating disorder treatment will require support of those in your family.

During the assessment, we may also do physical observations such as your weight and height. If this makes you anxious, you can discuss this with your clinician at the time. In the latter part of the appointment, your clinician will discuss with you (and your family) their thoughts on what you have said, a possible diagnosis and treatment plan. There will also be time to begin your treatment and discuss the practical steps to follow (i.e. discuss meal plans, meal recording and supervision), prior to the next appointment. There will be a chance to discuss and share your goals for treatment, as well as think about other professionals that may be involved in supporting your recovery.

### ***2. Who will I see?***

In our Eating Disorder Service we work as a multi-disciplinary team of Psychiatrists, Psychologists and Dietician. This allows us to ensure that the appropriately experienced clinician can be involved in your care. It is not unusual for you to be involved with 2 or 3 of these clinicians at different phases in your treatment, depending on the need. We communicate together so that you get the best, joined up care.

### ***3. What type of therapy will I have?***

The type of therapy we use is called evidence-based, which means that many research and real-life clinical trials have shown that it works. These therapies have been specifically tailored to work for people with eating disorders. They all focus on nutritional restoration and identifying and resolving issues that may be underlying or maintaining the eating disorder. Often for young people we use a family based treatment - Family Therapy for Anorexia Nervosa (FT-AN) - which places a strong emphasis on working with families to re-discover their strengths and resources to overcome the young person's illness. For older adolescents and adults with any type of eating disorder, we may use Cognitive Behaviour Therapy - Eating Disorder (CBT-ED) which explores your thoughts and emotions to help break unhelpful patterns of behaviour such as binge eating or restriction. Maudsley Anorexia Nervosa Treatment for Adults (MANTRA) is useful for older adolescents and adults with anorexia. Therapist and patient collaboratively follow a workbook, which explores issues around identity, thinking styles, and managing emotions and relationships. You may have undertaken some of these therapies before, or feel they are not suitable for you, in which case we can discuss other options too. Our therapists are all highly skilled and experienced in working with people with eating disorders.

### ***4. Will I need to take medication?***

Depending on the difficulties you are having, your clinician may have a conversation with you regarding the role of medication. In children and adolescents, medication is not usually first-line treatment, and may be reserved for those who have not responded to other treatment or severe cases where risk is high. Medication can also be helpful in supporting you if there are co-morbid mental health difficulties such as depression or anxiety. It can be a helpful adjunct to other treatment/therapy and is rarely used on its own.

Particularly with children and adolescents, medication will always be discussed with parents and a joint decision made.

### ***5. How long will treatment take, and will it work?***

Of course, the length of treatment is different for everyone and depends upon the nature of your presentation. Therapy tends to start weekly and then reduces in frequency as you become more confident in managing by yourself. Often, because people with anorexia need time to gain weight to recover, treatment can be 30-40 sessions spread over a year. For individuals with more bulimic or binge eating difficulties, treatment takes 12-20 sessions over 6 months.

Because we use evidence based treatments, we know that these have been shown to work and are the best available therapies. Most people will recover or see significant improvement. If treatment is not working as you hoped, we will always have a review and discussion with you to consider all options. For a smaller group of people, eating disorders can take a more persistent course and be harder to recover from. In these cases, we often work with you to think about what your goals are right now, and how you can reach them.

