

# HEALTH NOW

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## ARE DIETICIANS QUALIFIED TO TREAT EATING DISORDERS?

Research recently conducted in the UK has shown that eating disorders are responsible for more deaths than any other psychiatric disease. Eating disorders are complex illnesses requiring treatment for both psychological and physical symptoms. It has become more common for diverse, multidisciplinary teams to be involved in treatment as they can provide medical and psychological as well as nutritional help.

Dieticians are experts in nutrition, and more of them are beginning to establish themselves as experts in helping to treat eating disorders too. Julie Deane-Williams, a registered dietician and spokesperson for the Association for Dietetics in South Africa (ADSA), suggests that in some cases, the dietician may also be the first expert the patient encounters. She says, 'Even though there are high levels of denial associated with disorders such as anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa, the dietician is often the healthcare professional on call, especially when it comes to a person struggling with emotional eating or binge eating disorder.'

Julie says not all dieticians are qualified to help with eating disorders; they first need to skill themselves to be able to provide treatment. 'In order to play their role effectively on a multidisciplinary team, they also need to have a general understanding of the mental health issues as well as the various psychological interventions and their applications. It would be an advantage to the dietician to have expert communication, counselling and behaviour change skills,' Julie advises.

Dieticians who are involved in the treatment of eating disorders have an important role to play as they can provide assessment, treatment, monitoring and support to patients. They also serve as valuable sources of nutrition knowledge for the patient, the patient's family and the other healthcare professionals on the treatment team.

Julie says that with a team of experts and the right support, sufferers of eating disorders can recover. 'In fact,' she adds, 'not only can they recover, they can find out who they really are - bright and exceptionally intuitive people who had developed a coping mechanism to keep their "heads above water" during extremely challenging times in their lives. Once they develop healthy ways of managing difficult emotions, they can go on to thrive, and create healthy and happy lives.'

If you or a loved one feel you're struggling with an eating disorder, consider visiting a registered dietician for expert guidance and advice. Visit [Adsa.org.za](http://Adsa.org.za) for dieticians in your area.



## More than just a skin fix

Collagen has long been associated with plumping and smoothing skin, but it turns out true beauty really does come from inside! Collagen is fast gaining mainstream momentum as the ultimate superfood to add to your diet.

This protein is found naturally in your skin, bones, joints and cartilage, but decreases significantly as you age. Taking collagen supplements can help restore protein to your system, help maintain a healthy gut, help wounds to heal, improve your immune system, relieve anxiety and promote healthy, younger-looking skin. Powdered collagen is one of the cleanest types of protein and is free of additives found in many protein products. Add some to your morning smoothie or cereal to start feeling and looking healthier.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Neglecting the health of your gums and not paying enough attention to them as part of your oral health routine can lead to serious issues. If left untreated, gum problems can evolve into periodontal disease, an unpleasant condition that affects about 20% of adult South Africans. Periodontal disease can also lead to other health issues including respiratory problems, heart disease and stroke.

Source: Phillips  
Oral Health

