



Exercise and Eating Disorders

“Engaging in unhealthy exercise, and similarly, practicing complete exercise abstinence, can cause many issues. If we don’t address exercise during recovery, outcomes can be similar to if we didn’t address eating. It’d be like expecting a person to “just eat” without providing any support during treatment” Alanah Dobinson (Exercise Physiologist)

Safe Exercise at Every Stage (SEES) approach

In our conversation with Alanah, we explored her and her colleagues’ journey as they created a set of clinical guidelines, “SEES”, to help manage exercise during eating disorder recovery.

The development of the SEES guidelines included:

- A meta-analysis to create an evidence base to work from
- Consultation with world experts
- Drawing on the experience and knowledge of Lived Experience
- Integrating existing clinical practice, experience and research.



Read more: safeexerciseateverystage.com

Managing exercise at different levels of recovery

Conversations, culture and perceptions of recovery, where movement is reportedly “helpful” and “healthy”, not “harmful”, can be confusing.

For example: During a recovery journey, should a person run a marathon, or steer completely clear of exercise?

To help answer this, considerations may include, but are not limited to:

- Physical recovery (medical stability)
- Current unhealthy thought processes linked to exercise
- Relationship with your body
- The main reason behind engaging in a particular form of exercise.

Exercise and ED recovery

Unwise: Engaging in movement and/or thoughts that compromise, rather than support, wellbeing (e.g. compulsive, obligatory, excessive or driven exercise).

Unwise: Exercise Abstinence: Not engaging in any form of exercise or education, which may lead to engagement in more risky coping strategies.

Wise mind: Intuitive Movement (IM): Engaging in activities which facilitate a safe return to body movement and exercise.

In Wise Mind (IM), explore the following:

- What's my reason for exercising right now?
- Have I eaten regularly, adequately and a variety of food?
- Am I hydrated?
- How has my sleep been?
- Am I tired, ill or injured?
- Could something else be more helpful for my health right now?



Read more: [RAVES Model](#)

Be aware and vigilant; seek medical treatment around

- Ongoing, unstable or moderate to severe chest pain
- Fainting or near-fainting
- Dizziness
- Paleness
- Bluish skin colour
- Central nervous system issues e.g. difficulty controlling body movements or speech
- Intoxication from drugs or alcohol
- Shortness of breath
- Light-headedness
- Confusion
- Nausea
- Cold/clammy skin
- Wheezing
- Leg cramps (or know what is causing the cramps)
- Fatigue
- Fluid retention in the limbs
- Difficulty following Treatment and/or Meal plans
- Return to problematic exercise

Mindful and Intuitive Movement should consider the following four principles (Calogero and Pedrotty, 2007)

1. Rejuvenate the body, not exhaust or deplete it
2. Enhance mind-body connection, not allow or induce disconnection
3. Alleviate mental and physical stress, not produce more
4. Provide genuine enjoyment, not pain or dread.