

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The New Abnormal: Eating Disorders Continue to Rise as Pandemic Conditions Persist

February 1st, 2022, North Vancouver, B.C.

Isolation, uncertainty, fears for safety, and abrupt changes in routines during successive COVID-19 waves are all having a negative impact on people's mental health. Youth have been particularly hard hit: up to 70% of Canadian youth have experienced a decline in one or more mental health areas since the start of the pandemic (Vaillancourt, Szatmari, Georgiades, and Krygsman, 2021). Eating disorders among youth are an urgent concern. A new study estimates the overall incidence of eating disorders across the globe is four times higher than originally believed (Zipfel, Schmidt, and Giel, 2022). An additional 41.9 million cases have been added due to recognizing and designating binge-eating disorder and other specified feeding or eating disorder (OSFED) as part of the eating disorder spectrum (Zipfel et al., 2022).

Many of the risk factors that contribute to developing eating disorders are alarmingly widespread among youth and exacerbated by pandemic conditions. These include social isolation, lack of structure, limited access to fitness and wellness supports, increased time on social media, increased exposure to diet and fitness trends and exposure to unrealistic depictions of ideal bodies. People in recovery or currently experiencing struggles with their eating or body image are also finding that these factors are worsening current symptoms, contributing to the onset of new ones, or even kickstarting a full-blown eating disorder.

As a result, awareness and prevention of eating disorders is more important than ever. [Jessie's Legacy Eating Disorders Prevention Program has developed a toolkit](#) for Provincial Eating Disorders Awareness Week running from Feb 1st – 7th this year to mitigate the risk. The toolkit includes:

- “Navigating Transitions and Uncertainty: A Conversation about Eating Disorders and Body Image on Campus” an interactive online presentation led by Jessie's Legacy for Healthy Minds|Healthy Campuses.
 - **When:** February 2, 2022 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.
 - **Register here:** <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/249732736337>
- A podcast with a therapist and an individual with lived experience of an eating disorder discuss how disconnection, isolation, and stigma impact the road to recovery.
- An online self-assessment tool to gauge your relationship with your body and eating attitudes
- Communities across BC will have provincial landmarks lighting up in purple to bring awareness and show support for the cause from February 1st – February 7th, 2022

[About Jessie's Legacy Eating Disorders Prevention:](#)

Jessie's Legacy, a program of Family Services of the North Shore, provides education, resources, and inspiration to prevent eating disorders and address disordered eating across B.C.

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Citations:

Tracy Vaillancourt, Peter Szatmari, Katholiki Georgiades, and Amanda Krygsman. The impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of Canadian children and youth. *FACETS*. 6(): 1628-1648.

<https://doi.org/10.1139/facets-2021-0078>

Zipfel, S., Schmidt, U., & Giel, K. (2022). The hidden burden of eating disorders during the COVID-19 pandemic. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 9(1), 9-11. doi: 10.1016/s2215-0366(21)00435-1