**BBC Radio 4**

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 right at the start of the programme the thought that there are more women in their 40s and 50s with eating disorders that we might think research by University College London and the school of medicine at Mount Sinai hospital in new York looked at 5000 women in Britain and reported that one in 28 in that age bracket between 40 and 50

we're living with anorexia or billion you conditions that we might associate age incorrectly obviously with much younger people Tom Quinn from beat the eating disorders charity's able to join us this morning some good morning to you good morning before we get started she told a couple of emails have just come into the programme this to listen he says I'm now 41 and I've suffered the age of 20 when I write that I can't believe it's actually 22 years what a waste sadly this is part of my life now and it's a hard one to tackle a just live with it I've never told anybody except my parents obviously I'd do hide it well I avoid social situations involving food and single not married no kids I'm on my own business and work hard at this on the flipside I'm extremely determined and hard-working and Yes a bit of a perfectionist another listener I've had an eating disorder for over 25 years I'm in my 40s I am a binge eater because my BMI is huge I have not been

able to access any treatment ever a local services very scarce and those needing input for acute anorexia and 9 pain due to the impact of my weight on my joints This is a disorder she says it is emphatically not a lifestyle choice how he had others very like that actually Tom you won't be surprised I guess non non Putin not so we have a helpline about 15 % of calls to our helpline about someone over the age of 40 and the stories we hear a very similar people have suffered for this year from this illness for sometimes decades and find it very difficult to speak out there's stigma think about all the mental illness including eating disorders but perhaps even more stigma when it comes to older people just because we don't expect it to exist now I know you did undertake this research but you made aware that it was happening and I think he thought

it was a good idea Yes certainly we need to improve awareness we need to improve understanding and this is a cohort of people that can be ignored and it is vital that does not happen hopefully this research and the opportunity is like like this one let us reach out to people that perhaps listening and let them know that they're not alone they may not told anyone about fairness but actually they don't have to live with their recoveries possible we encourage them to reach out to the professional help to just start that the road to recovery but as one via email us just explain this has become not just part of life it was a was become her life this is who she is now I'm not quite sure how you do go about breaking the cycle was more than a cycle it is very difficult and there is no question about that and what is true also is that the earlier you intervene

the more likely it is you recover that does not mean that anyone is beyond recovery it takes time it takes professional help professional counselling but we don't believe that anyone is is passed the point of no return beyond help is there any way of knowing whether the women who in this study have identified as having an eating disorder of some kind have got a new one so something that came on in their 40s or 50s or they are people who are ill in the past and are are now feeling that again will it seems like that they're both cases and of people but for whatever reason found that with this study had set an anonymous person it research they're able to speak out and they have never spoken before they've been suffering for many many years but we also finding an awful lot of people are developing eating disorders in later life perhaps brought about by home or work stress and pressure on and using this is a coping mechanism in order to have taken control what they eat

perhaps that gives a sense of of control in general an unfortunate we find that older people as well as younger people can be susceptible to developing eating disorder another email that just says Iris diagnosed with anorexia 52 after an episode of severe clinical depression each condition made the other worse now this Lady does go on to say she's had help and she is feeling significantly improved which is brilliant but when we talk about removing stigma that's one thing I think there is actually very encouraging way less stigma about mental illness they used to be Tom but getting help it anyway you live is extremely difficult and accessing Yes some fortune it does still feel like it's a bit of a postcode lottery the government quite recently brought out access and waiting time targets for younger people which is fantastic we now calling upon them to do the same for adults speakers we need to make sure that with scant resources we don't squeeze the support

that's available for older people because you know that no matter how old you are he still need help and and recovery still possible thank you very much Tom a suspect this is something we'll go back to because China in the past we have discussed this before We also spoke back in 2015 to a Professor Cindy Bulacan line you're aware of Hurst studies that as well Tom she's looking into possible genetic link in the is now belief is there not that this is caused by genetics in some way he Yes they're always certain that there is a genetic cause what with now trying to do is to pinpoint the specific genes responsible so we can help people identify risk people might be a risk of the illness and get help before before the problem and mergers so if you want more information links on the website not least to beat the eating disorders charity Tom Quinn thank you very much