



FEEDING AND EATING DISORDERS

BINGE EATING DISORDER

What it is:

Binge eating disorder is characterised by recurring episodes in which an individual eats in a set period of time, a great deal more than most individuals would consume in a similar time period and under similar circumstances. In binge-eating disorder, like bulimia nervosa, the individual feels a loss of control during a binge episode, as if they are unable to control what or how much they eat. They may also feel that once they have started eating they are unable to stop. The type of food consumed during a binge period can vary, and the focus tends to be more on the amount of food consumed rather than the specific items being eaten.

Binge eating is characterised by marked distress in the individual regarding the binge eating habits, eating more rapidly than normal, eating until feeling uncomfortably or even painfully full, eating large amounts of food even when not physically hungry, eating alone because of feelings of embarrassment regarding the amount of food eaten, feeling disgusted with oneself, depressed or guilty after a binge episode.

Individuals with binge-eating disorder are typically ashamed of their eating habits, and will attempt to hide their binge episodes from others. Binge eating usually occurs in secrecy when the individual is alone. Binge-eating disorder typically occurs in individuals that fall within normal to overweight weight categories. The disorder usually starts in adolescence or late adulthood, but can develop in later adulthood.

Common symptoms:

1. Recurring episodes of binge eating - eating in a set period of time (for example 2 hours or less) a great deal more than an individual would typically eat in that time and in those circumstances
2. Feeling a lack of control during this episode, feeling that you cannot stop eating or you have no control over how much you eat
3. The binge eating episodes are associated with three or more of the following: eating faster than usual, eating until feeling uncomfortably full, eating large amounts of food despite not being physically hungry,

eating alone because of feeling embarrassment regarding the amount of food eaten, feeling disgusted with yourself, guilty or depressed after eating



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Causes:

The specific causes of binge-eating disorder are not clear. There may be genetic influences, as binge-eating disorder has been found to run in families. Interpersonal stressors, dietary restraints, negative feelings relating to body weight or shape, or negative feelings regarding food may all also be risk factors for developing the disorder.

Remember to always consult a mental health or medical practitioner regarding any questions you may have about a mental health diagnosis and treatment options.

This factsheet is based on information obtained from the DSM-5:
American Psychiatric Association, 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition.*