



Binge Eating: FAQs

How do I know if I or someone I love is a binge eater?

Binge eating involves eating a large amount in a short period of time (within 2 hours) combined with a sense of lack of control over food intake, (feeling that one cannot stop eating or control how much one is eating) and the binge eating occurs, on average, at least 2 days a week for 6 months.

I sometimes eat more than I planned, is this binge eating?

While most people eat more than they want on occasion, indications that a person is binge eating are:

- eating much more quickly than usual during binge episodes
- eating until you are uncomfortably full
- eating large amounts of food even when you are not really hungry
- eating alone because you are embarrassed about the amount of food you are eating
- feeling disgusted, depressed, or guilty after overeating.

Who is at risk for binge eating?

Women are a little more likely to binge eat than men (three women for every two men); yo-yo dieting seems to be a factor as does being overweight at a young age. Other factors that appear to be tied to binge eating are present or past depression and dieting, where dieting means skipping meals, not eating enough food each day, or avoiding certain kinds of food which then leads to a binge. Binge eating is also tied to emotions so it follows that certain behaviors and emotional problems are more common in people with binge eating disorder including: abusing alcohol, impulsive behavior, feeling out of control, feeling isolated from the community, and not noticing and talking about feelings.

What are the risks of binge eating?

People who binge eat are often upset by their binging and may become depressed or compensate for the binging with Bulimia. Research also shows that people who have binge eating disorder have more health problems, stress, trouble sleeping and suicidal thoughts than those who do not have the disorder. Binge eating also can cause obesity which may put someone at risk for health problems such as: Type II diabetes, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol levels, gallbladder disease, heart disease, and certain types of cancer.

If my loved one is a Binge eater – how do I get them to stop binging?

Binge eating is a complex disease that requires more than merely stopping the binging. Binge eating may also mask mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. Unless the emotional component is addressed, the binge eater may turn to other impulsive behaviors (alcohol, overspending, gambling, etc.) to cope with their emotions. Research is divided on whether or not binge eaters should go on a weight reduction plan since dieting often leads to binging but most treatment plans include counseling to learn how to express and control emotions, cope with

interpersonal relationships and assess for mental health issues such as depression.

Where do I find Treatment for Binge Eating?

Treatment is often long term and expensive and should contain the following components: Medical supervision, nutritional education, counseling (for the individual and/or the family), support groups and medication (if needed for depression/anxiety). The following organizations may help you find a treatment facility in your area.

- National Eating Disorders Association
<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org>
- Eating Disorder Referral and Information Center
<https://www.edreferral.com>
- Overeaters Anonymous
<https://www.aa.org>

Source

Weight-control Information Network (WIN)
An Information Service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)