

Understanding Binge Eating Disorder



Maybe you eat too much on weekends. Or you always order the jumbo tub of popcorn at the movies. Maybe you're hooked on chocolate chip cookies. But that doesn't mean you have binge eating disorder. For those who do, eating too much doesn't happen just once in a while. Instead, it's a constant part of life. But there are treatments that can help.

What is binge eating disorder?

Most people overeat every now and then. Binge eating occurs when you often can't control how much you eat. If you have the disorder, you'll have certain symptoms, such as:

- Feeling you can't control what or how much you eat
- Eating very fast
- Eating until you feel too full
- Eating large amounts of food even when you're not hungry
- Eating alone so no one will know how much you eat
- Feeling guilty or depressed about your eating

Who does it affect?

More women than men have binge eating disorder. It's also common among people who are very overweight. No one is sure just what causes binge eating. But it may be triggered by emotions, such as anger, sadness, or boredom. Feeling deprived on a strict diet may also cause some people to binge eat.

Why it's a problem

Binge eating may make it hard to live a normal life. You may miss work or school to binge eat. You also may feel depressed, guilty, or ashamed. As a result, you may decrease your social contact and try to hide your problem from others. But it's hard to deal with binge eating on your own. That's why it can help to talk to your healthcare provider. Working together, you can find ways to control your eating.

Risks of binge eating

If you weigh more than is healthy for you, you're more likely to develop:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Heart disease
- Gallbladder disease
- Certain types of cancer

To learn more

- [National Institute of Mental Health at www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov) or 866-615-6464
- [National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders at www.anad.org](http://www.anad.org) or 888-375-7767
- [National Eating Disorders Association at www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org) or 800-931-2237

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