

Dear Parents and Guardians,

See below an article by Dr. Pooky Knightsmith concerning eating disorders.

Kind regards,

Bobbie

Safeguarding Lead

Understanding binge eating disorder



Image: Dmitry Kalinin

Binge Eating disorder is not a very well known eating disorder, but is much more common than you might think. According to a US study, BED is more common than anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa.¹(link is external) It's also known as compulsive eating and is very similar to bulimia; the key difference being that sufferers of binge eating disorder do not purge after bingeing. This is why compulsive eaters tend to be overweight whereas bulimics tend to be closer to a normal weight.

Because of the increased risk of being overweight, sufferers of the disorder are more likely to be at risk of obesity-related illnesses such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes and heart disease.²(link is external)

People with binge eating disorder are emotional eaters and use food to cope with difficult or stressful situations. They are compelled to eat and feel out of control with their eating. People with binge eating disorder are routinely dismissed as being lazy or greedy, but this is not the case. Binge eating disorder is a recognised mental health issue which needs support and treatment.

Warning signs

None of these warning signs on their own mean that someone is definitely developing binge eating disorder. But, if they're exhibiting several of these signs, you're right to be concerned.

- **Weight increase or fluctuation.** Due to the vast amount of calories consumed over a binge, sufferers often experience rapid weight gain. As people with binge eating disorder are emotional eaters, they binge more when they're struggling, for example due to pressures at school/ home. Equally, their weight tends to plateau when things are easier.
- **Emotional eating.** One of the main reasons binge eaters eat when they're not hungry is because they eat emotionally. They use eating as a way to deal with difficult emotions as they don't know how else to manage them. The food they binge on is typically unhealthy, such as crisps, cake and chocolate, for example.
- **Eating alone.** Sufferers tend to be embarrassed by eating. They are keenly aware they're overweight and feel they should be eating less. They prefer to eat in private as they assume others are judging them.
- **Eats very quickly.** People with binge eating disorder are driven by powers beyond their control to eat as much and as quickly as possible.
- **Eats when not hungry.** Many of us snack when we're bored, or just want a treat, but binge eaters will take this to an extreme and consume enormous amounts of food in a short period of time.
- **Lack of control.** They want to eat less, but as they feel so out of control, they are unable to do so.
- **Moody or depressed.** People with binge eating disorder may also suffer from depression and anxiety.³(link is external)
- **Low self-esteem.** As with other eating disorders, binge eaters tend to have very low self-esteem. This often becomes a vicious cycle as their low self-esteem will drive them to compulsively eat and the resulting weight gain will lower their self-esteem further .
- **Can't focus on school work.**
- **Isolation from friends and family.** Their lives will often revolve completely around food and the hurt they're feeling inside. They'll often feel their friends won't understand them or even that they don't deserve to have friends.

If you're worried your child might have binge eating disorder, it's important to seek further help straight away by booking an appointment with your GP.

First though, it's a good idea to talk to them about it. To help you take these first steps, take a look at our articles on [talking to your child about an eating disorder](#) and [seeking professional treatment](#).

Footnote:

¹ According to the Binge Eating Disorder Association (BEDA), BED is more common than anorexia nervosa (AN) or bulimia nervosa (BN). BED occurs in 1 in 35 adults in the U.S. This translates in studies to 3-5% of women (about 5 million) and 2 % of men (3 million) who seek treatment. <http://www.anad.org/blog/binge-eating-disorder-the-most-common-eating-disorder/>

^{2,3} https://www.b-eat.co.uk/about-eating-disorders/types-of-eating-disorder/binge-eating-disorder?gclid=CjwKEAiA58a1BRDw6Jan_PLapw8SjABJz-ZW20cIJDfpRaF799t1w2Kg1CQz11h98HZBZHFw8HBrXxoCoqbw_wcB

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