

Binge Eating Disorder



Binge eating disorder (BED) is a relatively new eating disorder diagnosis characterized by recurrent episodes of eating large quantities of food (often very quickly and to the point of discomfort); a feeling of loss of control during the binge; experiencing shame, distress or guilt afterwards; and not regularly using unhealthy compensatory measures (e.g., purging) to counter the binge eating. Binge eating disorder is a severe, life-threatening and treatable eating disorder. Common aspects of BED include functional impairment, suicide risk, and a high frequency of co-occurring psychiatric disorders. It is estimated to affect 1-5% of the general population.¹ BED affects 3.5% of women, 2% of men,¹ and up to 1.6% of adolescents.²

Characteristics of BED

In addition to the diagnostic criteria for binge eating disorder, individuals with BED may display some of the behavioral, emotional and physical characteristics below:

- Evidence of binge eating, including the disappearance of large amounts of food in short periods of time or lots of empty wrappers and containers indicating consumption of large amounts of food.
- Secretive food behaviors, including eating secretly (e.g., eating alone or in the car, hiding wrappers) and stealing, hiding, or hoarding food.
- Periods of uncontrolled, impulsive, or continuous eating beyond the point of feeling uncomfortably full, but does not purge.
- Experiencing feelings of anger, anxiety, worthlessness, or shame preceding binges. Initiating the binge is a means of relieving tension or numbing negative feelings.
- Co-occurring conditions such as depression or anxiety may be present. Those with BED may also experience social isolation, moodiness, and irritability, guilt and shame.

BED Treatment

If you, or someone you know is dealing with BED, help is available through your Employee Assistance Program. Licensed counselors can connect you to a provider in your area, and provide informational resources for additional support.

Employee Assistance Program
800-451-1834



1. Hudson, J.I., Hiripi, E., Pope, H.G. et al. (2007) The prevalence and correlates of eating disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Biol. Psychiatry*, 61, 348–358.

2. Swanson SA, Crow SJ, Le Grange D, Swendsen J, Merikangas KR. Prevalence and correlates of eating disorders in adolescents. Results from the national comorbidity survey replication adolescent supplement. *Archives of General Psychiatry*. 2011;68(7):714–723