

Binge eating disorder can be treated

10 November 2015, by Ann Blackford

When most people hear the term "eating disorder," they usually think of anorexia or bulimia nervosa. While anorexia and bulimia are more commonly recognized, doctors are concerned about a different kind of eating disorder that is on the rise.

Binge-eating disorder, or BED, is a disorder characterized by excessive overeating. Though it is common to overindulge occasionally, especially around the holidays, those with BED are plagued with insatiable cravings that lead to recurrent episodes of intense overconsumption. Unlike the binge and purge aspect of bulimia, those with BED do not try to compensate for the caloric intake by excessive exercise or induced vomiting.

Symptoms of [binge eating disorder](#) include:

- Eating unusually large amounts of food in short periods of time
- Feeling like your [eating behavior](#) is out of control
- Eating when full or not hungry
- Frequently eating alone or in secret
- Feeling guilty about binge episodes

BED is quickly becoming the most commonly diagnosed eating disorder in the United States, affecting one in 35 people. More than six million people have been diagnosed with BED since the American Psychological Association first recognized it as a disorder in 2013. BED is what doctors call an 'equal opportunity' disease. Unlike anorexia and bulimia, which more commonly affects women, or [body dysmorphic disorder](#), which is seen more in men, binge eating disorder tends to occur equally among the sexes.

Though doctors and psychologists are unsure of what triggers binge eating disorder, they have noticed increased prevalence in those with a history of depression or dieting and weight fluctuation, and/or a family history of eating disorders. Young adults are also more likely to suffer from eating disorders.

Since binge eating disorder is treated as a mental illness, other psychiatric disorders are often linked with BED. The most common are depression and anxiety. Obesity is also frequently associated with BED and can cause other medical conditions such as heart disease, hypertension, sleep apnea, type 2 diabetes and [gastroesophageal reflux disease](#) (GERD).

If you or someone you know shows signs of binge eating disorder, encourage them to talk to a physician or psychologist. BED is very treatable through medication, lifestyle changes, and/or psychotherapy.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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