



## Food Addiction

### **What is Binge Eating Disorder?**

Binge Eating Disorder (BED) is the most common eating disorder among people. It is characterized by recurring episodes of excessive food consumption, over a short period of time and often to the point of discomfort, accompanied by a loss of control, and feelings of shame and guilt. Binge eating disorder may also be referred to as emotional eating or compulsive overeating or food addiction. Binge eating disorder is a serious psychological illness which severely interferes with one's health and happiness. It frequently results in stress, isolation and reduced quality of life.

### **Do Binge Eaters Gain Weight?**

While recurrent binge eating can ultimately result in weight gain, binge eating disorder is not directly associated with weight – one does not have to be overweight to have it.

### **How is Binge Eating Disorder Diagnosed?**

For someone to be diagnosed with binge eating disorder, the binge episodes must occur at least once a week for three months. However, related episodes of shorter frequency are still a cause for concern. People often experience binge eating for months or years before seeking treatment.

### **What is Binge Eating?**

A binge eating episode can manifest in several ways, including eating very rapidly, eating beyond the point of feeling full, eating when not physically hungry or eating alone in secrecy.

The food consumed during a binge episode can vary from person to person, but often involves foods identified as “forbidden foods.” These may include sweets, high-fat and processed foods. A binge eating episode can last over an hour, though it may be much shorter or longer. Sometimes binge eating is a planned activity and other times it is not.

Most binges involve the consumption of more than 1,000 calories, with a quarter of binges exceeding 2,000 calories. Unlike other eating disorders, those with binge eating disorder do not engage in compensatory behaviors like purging, excessive exercise or fasting, designed to “undo” the calories consumed during a binge.



## Why do People Binge?

Binge eating is often a mechanism for coping or an attempt to manage emotional pain or stress. Individuals often describe a feeling of being “zoned out,” unaware of the magnitude of food being consumed and lacking the ability to stop eating.

While certain thoughts and feelings can be temporarily relieved by a binge eating episode, it is often followed by intense emotional turmoil. Feelings of guilt about eating certain foods or eating in a certain way can contribute to the shame around having binge eating disorder. Shame and guilt can affect attention and concentration at school or work and can result in secretiveness around behaviours. It affects relationships and increases social isolation.

Although binge eating disorder has been an official clinical diagnosis for only four years, it’s a condition that has left a lasting impact on nearly eight million Americans.

## Binge Eating Disorder Statistics

- Binge eating disorder impacts approximately 2.8 million adults in Australia
- An estimated 3.5% of women, 2% of men, and 30% to 40% of those seeking weight loss treatments can be clinically diagnosed with binge eating disorder, according to the Binge Eating Disorder Association (BEDA).
- Binge eating disorder affects three times the number of those diagnosed with anorexia and bulimia combined.
- Only 43% of those impacted by binge eating disorder will receive treatment specific to the condition
- 40% of those with binge eating disorder are men
- 70% of those with binge eating disorder are obese
- 30% of patients who have had gastric bypass surgery meet the DSM-5 criteria for binge eating disorder .

## Who Is Affected by Binge Eating Disorder?

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It affects individuals of all ages, genders, races and ethnicities; an estimated 60% of cases occur among women. Binge eating disorder affects 3.5% of women, 2% of men and 1.6% of adolescents.

The typical age range of those who experience binge eating disorder is broader than that of eating disorders. Generally, binge eating disorder is most common in adulthood, specifically early adulthood for women and midlife for men. Research shows many binge eating behaviors first develop in teenage years and early adulthood.



According to the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA), some studies have shown that gay, lesbian and bisexual teens are at higher risk for developing binge eating disorder.

### **Health Risks of Binge Eating Disorder**

The health risks of binge eating disorder affect both physical and mental health. Binge eating disorder can result in psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, social isolation, and feelings of worthlessness. Physical health risks of binge eating disorder include obesity, and related complications such as heart disease, high blood pressure and cholesterol.

### **Binge Eating Disorder Treatment**

Binge eating disorder is a serious eating disorder that can require professional treatment. Walden's binge eating disorder treatment is based on evidence-based practices and skills training, which are proven to yield a higher rate of positive outcomes. This includes Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) pharmacotherapy and Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT).